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POEMS.

UTTERANCE;

OR,

PRIVATE VOICES TO THE PUBLIC HEART.

A

COLLECTION OF HOME-POEMS.

BY

Mrs. CAROLINE A. Kenton BRIGGS Mason

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BY CAROLINE A. BRIGGS,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of Massachusetts.

To my best Friends and earliest;

My Father and Mother; —

These Poems are affectionately Dedicated

By their Daughter.

PROEM.

I begged of our dear Lord one gift from Heaven, —
A true and simple Utterance, — and 'twas given.

CONTENTS.

VOICES OF AFFECTION.

	Page
Do They Miss Me,	17
The Love-Wreath,	20
Names,	27
To ..... at Parting,	30
The Gift,	33
"Kiss Me,"	35
Carrie,	36
The Portrait,	39
To .....,	43
The Mystic Harp,	44
To ..... in Absence,	46
Dreams,	49
Rosabelle,	50

Page

A Heart-Thought, ... 53

"Fail Me Not Thou," 54

A Sister's Memory, ... 57

A Sister's Grave, ... 62

Mary, ... 65

Sonnet, ... 69

VOICES OF CHEER.

Try, ... 73

An Incident, ... 75

"Weeping may endure for a Night," &c., ... 77

A Lesson, ... 80

Trust to the Future, ... 83

A VOICE FOR THE POOR.

A Voice for the Poor, ... 89

Page

VOICES OF GRIEF.

The Motherless, ... 111

"The Forced Bridal," 116

The Maniac's Death-Song, ... 119

May, ... 122

A Ballad, ... 126

Lena, ... 130

The Ocean Bell, ... 139

The Changed Meeting, ... 143

Life, ... 146

A Sea-Side Thought, ... 149

Stanzas, ... 152

Sonnet, written on the Fly-leaf of a Favorite Author, . . 154

Sonnet, — Poor Heart of Mine, ... 155

A Memory, ... 156

SACRED VOICES.

A Thought of Eternity, ... 159

Sabbath-Evening Hymn, ... 161

The Happy Land, ... 164

Page

The Pilgrim, ... 167

Truth, ... 170

"A Strange Pulpit," 176

John 21 : 15 – 17, ... 179

Musings, ... 181

Prayer, ... 184

Night Hymn, ... 186

VOICES BY THE WAY.

"Wishing Bridge," 191

July Twenty-Seventh, ... 194

Kernwood, ... 193

"Just Sixteen," 201

Twilight, ... 203

Summer Hymn, ... 206

Love's Illusion, ... 209

An Impromptu, ... 212

Sonnet, — to William R. Dempster, ... 214

Sonnet, — written on the Fly-leaf of Wordsworth's Memoirs, . 215

My Grave, ... 216

Night, ... 219

Page

Strife and Peace, ... 223

When I am Old, ... 227

Auburn Dale, ... 231

The Rain, ... 233

Evening, ... 237

Autumn Leaves, ... 240

The Child's Last Wish, ... 243

Hesperus, ... 245

The Origin of Dimples, ... 247

Sadness, ... 249

Truth vs. Custom, ... 252

VOICES OF AFFECTION

VOICES OF AFFECTION.

DO THEY MISS ME?

Do they miss me at home, do they miss me?
'Twould be an assurance most dear
To know that this moment some loved one
Was saying, "Oh, were she but here!"
To know that the group at the fireside
Were thinking of me as I roam, —
Oh yes, 'twould be joy beyond measure,
To *know* that they missed me at home!

When twilight approaches — the season
That ever was sacred to Song —
Does some one repeat my name over,
And sigh that I tarry so long?

And is there a chord in the music
That's missed when my voice is away?
And a chord in each heart that awaketh
Regret at my wearisome stay?

Do they place me a chair near the table
When evening's home-pleasures are nigh,
And candles are lit in the parlor,
And stars in the calm azure sky?
And when the good-nights are repeated,
Does each the dear memory keep,
And think of the absent, and waft me
A whispered "Good-night" ere they sleep?

Do they miss me at home, do they miss me,
At morning, at noon, and at night? —
And lingers one gloomy shade round them
That only my presence can light? —
Are joys less invitingly welcomed,
And pleasures less dear than before,
Because one is missed from the circle, —
Because *I* am with them no more?

Oh yes — they *do* miss me — kind voices
Are calling me back as I roam,
And eyes have grown weary with weeping,
And watch but to welcome me home!
Sweet friends, ye shall wait me no longer —
No longer I'll linger behind —
For how can I tarry while followed
By watchings and pleadings so kind?

THE LOVE-WREATH.

TO ....

I'VE twined thee, love, a flow'ry wreath
To bind upon thy brow,
And with kind words on every leaf
I bid it seek thee now.
I've searched the garden thro' and thro',
The green-house, grove, and dell,
And rifled them of half their sweets
For her I love so well.
I thought, at least, my gift would be
A messenger of love to thee.

And as I plaited tirelessly
Each leaf, and bud, and flower,
I smiled to think how sweeter grew
My labor every hour.

And with each leaf, and flower, and bud,
I wove a loving thought,
And hid a kiss in every plait
My busy fingers wrought, —
Thinking the while how fair 'twould shine
Above that sweet, young brow of thine!

Methought that from the thousand flowers
That met my raptured eye,
I'd cull but those whose names were linked
With love and purity.
Dost know the language, sweet, of flowers? —
And canst thou read in each,
The messages I bid them bear,
And truths I bid them teach?
Then study well the garland bright
I've woven with such rare delight.

First, from the garden's wealth, I stole
Sweet [1]Rose-buds, fresh and fair,
And [2]Myrtle-sprigs, — because the friend
I cherished was not there.

And with the blue [3]Forget-me-not
I wove a [4]Bay-leaf green,
While [5]Crocus-flowers and [6]Violets
Came peeping up between;
And [7]Pinks and [8]Pansies blended there
With [9]Amaranths more rich and rare.

The [10]Star of Bethlehem next I twined
Among the blooming throng,
Calm thoughts of Him of whom they breathed
Stealing my heart along.
And the sweet [11]Cherry-bloom was there,
And leaning on its cheek,
Lay the pale [12]Snowball, like a child,
All trustingly and meek;
And from each white and graceful cup
Methought pure prayer seemed gushing up.

And [13]Orange-flowers all white and fair,
And [14]Lilies, pure as they,
I sought with studied grace and skill
Within the wreath to lay;

And young [15]Moss Rose-buds drooped their heads
So gracefully beside,
And blushed so sweetly, that I kissed
The darlings in my pride! —
Hoping my friend would like these best,
And prize them more than all the rest.

And [16]Honeysuckles twined their slight
And graceful fingers round,
And rosy [17]Laurels lovingly
With [18]Jasmines interwound;
Young [19]Daisies ope'd the long-fringed lids
Of their sweet, starry eyes,
Gazing on all the beauty there
As if in glad surprise; —
I thought how very like thine own
With love and happiness they shone!

And if awhile I dropped the wreath
To list the caroled glee
Of some bright bird, it made me think
So instantly of thee!

Thy ringing tones were in my ear,
My cheek was close to thine,
And I could almost feel thee link
Thy little hand with mine!
And when the pleasant dream was o'er,
I'd turn me to my flowers once more.

But thou art weary, love, perchance,
Nor car'st to hear me tell
Thus tirelessly of blossoms culled
From green-house, grove, and dell.
Enough that love has twined them all,
And given to each a tone
To tell thee that this trusting heart,
Though wayward, is thine own!
I'm glad that flowers have tongues to tell
What words could say not half so well!

Then take the wreath, and bind it, love,
Upon thy shining hair, —
Among those rich, dark curls of thine
That veil thy forehead fair; —

And gaze upon thy mirrored face,
  And own how lovelier yet
My gift has made thee, as it shines
  Among thy curls of jet —
And if, the while, thy heart run o'er
With love for me, I'll ask no more.

NOTES.

[1] Rose-bud — Confession of Love.

[2] Myrtle — Love in Absence.

[3] Forget-me-not — True Love.

[4] Bay-leaf — I Change but in Dying.

[5] Crocus — Smiles.

[6] Violet — Faithfulness.

[7] Pink — Lovely and pure Affection.

[8] Pansy — Tender and pleasant Thoughts.

[9] Globe Amaranth — Unchangeable.

[10] Star of Bethlehem — Let us follow Jesus.

[11] Cherry-blossom — Spiritual Beauty.

[12] Snowball — Thoughts of Heaven.

[13] Orange-flower — Woman's Worth.

[14] Lily — Purity and Sweetness.

[15] Moss Rose — Superior Merit.

[16] Honeysuckle — Fidelity.

[17] Laurel — Virtue is True Beauty.

[18] Jasmine — Amiability.

[19] Daisy — Beauty and Innocence.

NAMES.

"What's in a Name?"

ROMEO AND JULIET.

I SAT one day in merry mood,
With friends I loved around me;
One with her white arm over mine
In sweet embrace had bound me;
And one with meek and loving eyes,
And step like any fairy, —
And yet another, fair and gay, —
'Twas Ellen, Kate, and Mary.

"Now prithee tell," said merry Kate,
With sly and roguish glances,
Turning to mine her eye that aye
With mirth and mischief dances, —

"Now prithee tell which name of all
The thousands you have heard, love,
Is dearest, sweetest to your heart, —
Please tell the magic word, love."

Then Ellen with her soft, fair hand
Smoothed back my tumbled tresses,
And with a sweet and loving smile
Redoubled her caresses;
And murmured, as she kissed my lips,
"Say, Ellen — do, my Treasure!"
I'd half a mind to please the pet,
But begged one moment's leisure.

Then Kate, the little merry puss,
Came stealing up behind me,
And quick as thought her loving arms
Had claspingly entwined me;
And with a laugh of music-tone
She whispered, "Please say Kate, love."
I'd half a mind to, but replied,
"Nay — not so hasty — wait, love."

I gazed a moment on them each,
Those three so fair and youthful,
But longest looked in Mary's eyes,
So loving, meek, and truthful!
They filled with tears — but not a word
That moment's hush did vary;
Hers was the sweetest pleading yet —
I paused, — then murmured — "*Mary!*"

TO ..... AT PARTING

Thou sayest thou wilt ne'er forget,
That I shall ever be
A green spot on Life's desert waste,
A star of love to thee; —
A ray to cheer and warm, — and yet,
Believe it not; — thou wilt forget!

A few short years, perchance, thou'lt keep
My mem'ry fresh and green,
Recalling e'en each look of mine
Without a mist between; —
And think 'twill aye be so, — and yet,
Believe it not; — thou wilt forget!

I've met with friends who've vowed to me
To love through good and ill,

To cherish me till Life's warm pulse
Within their hearts grew still;
Forgetting me, oh ne'er! — and yet,
Alas, alas, they *did* forget!

My name to them is now like some
Dim mem'ry of a song
They used to love to listen to, —
But that was long since — long: —
'Tis charmless now, and yet, and yet,
They said they never would forget.

A little time, and thou wilt write
My name all names above;
And then, perchance, thou too wilt find
Some dearer one to love, —
Some fairer one whom thou hast met,
And I, — alas, thou *wilt* forget!

Believe it not that I shall live
Within thy heart for aye:

Recall this weary, parting hour
Some future, distant day,
And thou wilt start to find that yet,
With all thy care, — thou did'st forget!

THE GIFT.

TO ....

She gave me a rose-bud — the latest
That bloomed on her favorite tree —
And smilingly said, "'Tis the last one,
Yet, dearest, I've culled it for thee."
I took the sweet gift with a gladness
That thrilled to my innermost breast, —
A gladness aroused by that whisper,
"'Tis thine, love, — the latest and best."

I prize not the favors oft lavished
Where riches and plenty abound, —
The gift of a blossom when thousands
Just like it are blooming around; —
But when, like this delicate rose-bud,
Some token of friendship is mine

All warm with the heart's best devotion,
Not Ind the sweet gift can outshine.

Then thanks for thine off'ring, my own one!
I'll keep it tho' withered and dead.
It still breathes a tale of affection
Altho' its sweet beauty has fled.
It brings me dear thoughts of the giver,
And lovingly whispers to me
Thine own precious words, "'Tis the last one,
Yet, dearest, I've culled it for thee!"

"KISS ME."

My heart is yearning for the tone
And smile of a beloved one.
If she were here, I'd softly say,
"Dearest, before we part to-day,
Kiss me!"

Dear darling, when my heart is sad,
And when my pulse beats warm and glad, —
Whatever be my spirit's tone,
In crowds together, or alone,
Kiss me!

Thus may I ever say to thee:
"Though other friends may lose for me
The look of love that once they wore,
I love thee, darling, more and more! —
Kiss me!"

CARRIE.

"It must be sweet in childhood to give back
The spirit to its Maker." WILLIS.

DYING in beauty — ere sorrow has taken
One tint from the rose that lay warm on her cheek;
Before the dark shadows that follow Life's morning
Have shrouded our Blossom so lovely and meek!

Dying in beauty — tho' now, alas, wasted,
Round were her limbs in their delicate grace; —
Fair glowed her cheek with the flush of enjoyment; —
Bright was the sunshine that laughed in her face.

Dying in youth — not decrepit and aged,
Weary and earth-worn and sick of the strife —
Called to the grave in the morn of existence,
Summoned to Death, from the threshold of Life!

Dying in peace: — On her fair, tranquil bosom
Rest her white fingers, so wasted and thin;
Over her features a calm smile is straying,
Type of the peace of God reigning within.

Dying beloved — not unwept and uncared-for; —
Tears fall in showers on the face of the child
Under the snowy sheet dreaming so peacefully,
Meeting strange Death with an aspect so mild!

Breathe in her ear the dear hymns of her childhood
When she awakes from her death-like repose;
Press on her forehead sweet kisses of fondness,
Place in her bosom a half-blossomed rose.

Smile on her pleasantly — tell her not gloomily
Death, the grim tyrant, is coming anon; —
Say to her, "Darling, an angel is waiting,
Eager to take thee where Jesus has gone."

Gently and quietly smooth down her pillow,
Gather fresh roses to lay in her hand;
Soon will her weary soul, loosed and unfettered,
Plume its faint wing for the sweet spirit-land!

Dim o'er her forehead, her white, dewy forehead,
Cluster the shadowy waves of her hair, —
Smooth them not, tho' it be never so tenderly, —
Leave them untouched in their loveliness there.

Close on her cheek lie her fair, blue-veined eyelids,
Hiding the beauty that slumbers beneath, —
Tremulous now with the throbbings of weakness;
Soon they will rest in the quiet of death!

Peace to thy slumber, thou lovely and stricken one,
Peace — tho' thou wake from it only to die.
Strange that the spoiler should breathe on such freshness!
Strange that such beauty in darkness should lie!

Gently and quietly smooth down her pillow,
Gather fresh roses to lay in her hand;
Soon will her happy soul, loosed and unfettered,
Plume its white wing for the sweet spirit-land.

Dying in childhood — in peace and in beauty, —
Dying with love o'er the dark way to shine, —
Who, thou sweet child, while they wept, would not envy?
Who would not wish for an exit like thine?

THE PORTRAIT.

AN INCIDENT.

I MET her in a shady dell
  One pleasant summer day, —
A fair, bewitching, smiling child,
  With buds and flowers at play:
I started back in quick surprise,
And pressed my hands on both my eyes!

I scarcely could believe my sight! —
  That sweet one in her glee,
So beautiful and pure — so like,
  So very like to thee, —
It seemed as though thine own dear face
Were raised to mine in childish grace!

There was the same unwritten brow, —
  The same dark-fringéd lid, —

The same blue eyes that smiled beneath,
Like violets half hid; —
And lips just parted, — so like thine,
I bent to press them close to mine.

And dimples played upon her cheek,
And curls of soft brown hair;
Awhile I fancied 'twas no dream
That held me breathless there, —
Forgetting years had passed away
Since we were little ones at play.

Long, troubled years — and Time since then
Has written change on each,
And taught us many a weary thing
That Time alone can teach.
They say I should not know thee now
With thy changed face and altered brow.

The bloom has vanished from thy cheek,
And left it pale as snow;

I cannot think of thee, my friend,
Disguised and altered so?
I cannot picture thee as years
Have made thee with their wand of tears!

I can recall thee but as when
We parted long ago.
My Beautiful! how very fair
I thought thee in thy woe, —
Thy drooping, shadowy eyes all wet
With tears of sadness and regret, —

Thy warm cheek resting on my own, —
Thy quick breath meeting mine, —
And thy rich curls — alas, no more
Bewitchingly they shine!
I could not twine them now, as then,
With flower-buds from the grassy glen!

My early Friend, my Beautiful,
My Own, my Unforgot,

To other eyes thou may'st be changed,
To me thou changest not;
I see thee after years have past,
As fair as when I saw thee last.

I see thee in my nightly dreams; —
Thou comest in my sleep,
Lifting thy calm, pure face to mine,
All beautiful and meek;
With just the glance of that sweet child
I met in yonder valley wild.

I would that I could meet again
That fair and smiling girl; —
I know she stole her lips from thee,
Her radiant brow and curl; —
I know, at least, there could not be
More perfect portraiture of thee!

TO ....

I've felt so many lips grow cold,
That once prest mine with love's warm token, —
I've known so many vows decay,
Almost before the words were spoken, —
I've seen so many friends, once dear,
Pass me with cold, averted eye, —
That I have almost learned to doubt
The strength of human constancy.

Yet still I turn to thee, sweet friend,
And with a love now warm and glowing,
I place this trusting hand in thine,
With it, the while, my heart bestowing.
And yet, perhaps, we two shall grow
Unfriendly in the lapse of years!
But wherefore speak I thus? — Forgive —
My heart is full — my eyes o'erflow with tears!

THE MYSTIC HARP.

TO . . . .

THE human Heart — it is a strange
And a mysterious thing;
An instrument of wondrous power, —
Each pulse a trembling string.
And hourly on this mystic Harp
Play the great hands of Time, —
Drawing strange discords from its strings
Or melody sublime.

He bids pale Sorrow touch the chords,
And sobbing sounds are heard;
He summons Joy — and quick the notes
Are gleeful as a bird!
He calls rude Anger, and her hands
Sweep wildly o'er the strings,

And oft to try this mystic Harp
Love and Regret he brings.

Be thine a sweet Æolian Harp
Touched by the winds alone,
Which, be they rough or gentle, draw
The same melodious tone.
Then, though old Time assault it oft
With breezes rough and high,
Thy heart shall know but one response,—
Sweet, tuneful melody!

TO .... IN ABSENCE.

I HAVE been gazing on the stars,
That like sweet angels' eyes
Are smiling on me from their homes
In the far distant skies; —
So lovingly their glances shine,
I cannot choose but think of thine.

I have been looking at the flowers,
And stealing from their bloom
Full many a sweet delicious breath,
All laden with perfume; —
But not a flower's soft lips met mine,
That did not make me think of thine.

I'm out upon the hills to woo
The cooling breezes now; —

How soothingly the soft winds lay
Their light hands on my brow! —
I start as if thine own were there,
Parting the tresses of my hair!

A dark curl floats upon the breeze,
And laughing tones are nigh, —
I know they are not thine, — and yet,
I fancy thou art by; —
For not one pleasant thing I see,
Or hear, but makes me think of thee!

I'm glad my spirit links thy name
With every gladsome sight, —
I'm glad I cannot hear a sound
That fills me with delight,
But that I feel thy soul is nigh,
Haunting that same sweet melody.

I would not change these happy thoughts
That glad me night and day,

That make thee ever near my side,
Tho' absent far away: —
Only thy living presence nigh,
Can bid these pleasant fancies fly.

'Till then I'll meet in every star,
Thine own sweet, earnest gaze, —
Thy breath in every flower, — thy touch,
In each soft wind that plays —
And link with every pleasant tone,
Some treasured cadence of thine own.

DREAMS.

I HAVE dreams of a fair little cot of our own
Where Love and Contentment shall smile;
Of a form that is near me when daylight is done,
And a hand in my own all the while;
I have dreams of a casement thrown up to the night,
With roses and vines peeping thro';
And while I am dreaming these dreams of delight,
I'm all the time thinking — of you!

ROSABELLE.

A THING all life and sunshine,
A glad and happy child,
With spirits ever changing,
Half earnest and half wild;
As fleet a little fairy
As ever graced a dell,
Or frolicked in a blossom,
Is our sweet Rosabelle.

I wish that you could meet her!
Her clear and happy eyes
Would break upon your vision
Like light from Paradise!
You'd know her in a moment —
You could'n't help it well —
For there's no other *like* her —
Our own, dear Rosabelle,

Her brow is just as open,
And sunny as the day;
And curls are dancing o'er it,
In their unfettered play.
Ah! loveliness and beauty
Have thrown their brightest spell
Around our darling blossom —
Our witching Rosabelle!

Her mouth is made for kisses,
And when she lifts her face,
She seems to ask the tribute,
With her unconscious grace.
Her lips are ripe and glowing,
With just that pouting swell
That painters love to copy —
Our peerless Rosabelle!

Her voice is soft and child-like,
Yet gleeful as a bird's;
I love to list the cadence
Of her half-warbled words.

Her laugh is like the music
Of some sweet silver bell;
I hear it in the passage,
And know 'tis Rosabelle.

A thing all life and sunshine,
A glad and happy child,
With spirits ever changing,
Half earnest and half wild;
As fleet a little fairy
As ever graced a dell,
Or frolicked in a blossom,
Is our sweet Rosabelle!

A HEART-THOUGHT.

I LOVE thee, oh so dearly! Never flowers
Turned with such passionate fondness to the sun
As I to thee, my treasure! I, the flower,
And thou, the warm, bright sun!

"FAIL ME NOT THOU."

Fail me not thou! — How dark would be
This heart without thy love and truth! —
I could not teach it to forget
The happy lessons of its youth;
I could not bid it think of thee
Less warmly or less constantly.

Fail me not thou! — I could not bear
To have thy tones less kind than now;
And oh, I could not see thee wear
An altered look upon thy brow —
Twould be to me a fearful thing
Thus in the dust my hopes to fling!

Fail me not thou! — Thou could'st not find
A truer heart to cling to thee

Through joy and grief, than has been mine,
Nor one that loved more earnestly;
For art thou not my life, my pride? —
Dearer than all the earth beside?

Fail me not thou! — Oh, I have poured
My heart's whole treasure upon thine,
And deemed that Heaven could not afford
One joy like this — to call thee mine!
'Twas sinful thus to bow the knee
With such idolatry to thee!

Fail me not thou! — For I did learn
Too well the lessons thou hast taught;
It did not need a teacher stern
To do the work thy hand has wrought;
For thou did'st talk of love, and I
Listened, alas, too willingly.

Then fail me not! — My heart would be
So sad without thy love and truth! —

I could not teach it to forget
The happy lessons of its youth;
I could not bid it think of thee
Less warmly or less constantly!

A SISTER'S MEMORY.

My sister, my own sister,
How desolate seem the years
Since last we said good-bye to thee
Amid our falling tears!
God called thee to a stranger land,
To bless a stranger shore,
To live — nay, die for other hearts;
— Thou wilt return no more!

My sister, my own sister,
It seems so like a dream
That we may never meet again
Thine eye's soft, shadowy gleam!
Thou wast the fairest of us all,
The loveliest of the band, —
God chose the sweetest flower to plant
Within the better land.

I know 'tis only fancy,
But sometimes, even now,
I think I see thy calm, sweet face,
And press thine earnest brow.
Again my hand is linked with thine
Just as it used to be,
And we are bounding side by side,
As in those days of glee.

And then my heart grows calmer,
And sweet tears fill my eyes,
Although the while I stand and gaze
Upon the far-off skies;
I know thy home is there — I know
How happy thou must be,
And yet the tears will fill my eyes
Whene'er I think of thee.

My sister, my own sister,
They say that I am gay —
That I've forgotten her they laid
In the cold earth away —

'Tis true my laugh will sometimes ring
With its old tone of glee,
Bnt only when my girlish thoughts
One moment turn from thee.

Oh, often when the twilight
With sorrowing step draws nigh,
And stars are stealing one by one
Like spirits o'er the sky,
I hasten to thy quiet room,
(They do not know I'm there,)
Thy little quiet room, and pour
My weary heart in prayer.

My sister, my own sister,
It seems a holier place
Than any spot besides on earth,
For all the while thy face
Seems looking fondly into mine
With that meek, earnest gaze
It used to wear when thou wast here
In other, sunnier days.

My sister, my own sister,
How happy were we then!
— And yet my spirit does not love
To call it back again.
I think of quick, ungentle words,
And looks unkindly given,
And wonder if they grieve thee now
That thou hast passed to heaven.

Alas, my own, sweet sister,
If thou wast with me now,
How soothingly I'd part thy hair
And bathe thine aching brow! —
I'd cull for thee my fairest flowers,
And sing my sweetest song,
And sit beside thee all the day,
And watch the whole night long.

But God has called thee, darling,
To better things above,
And all that's left us now are these
Sweet mem'ries of thy love.

And this dear legacy shall be
A link in that blest chain
By which our souls one day shall rise
To dwell with thine again.

A SISTER'S GRAVE.

She sleeps beneath a glorious sky,
The blue dome of the palmy East;
Above her troops of stars go by,
And when their wondrous dance has ceased,
The first, warm kisses of the sun
Fall gently on our sleeping one.

Afar from noise, remote from strife,
She lies who was our love and pride;
Meek, gentle, quiet in her life,
Like peace in death is not denied;
And her last sleep is undisturbed
By tumult from the noisy herd.

Rest, dear one, in thy far-off bed, —
The grieving night-dews o'er thee weep,

But flowers are round thee, and o'erhead,
The warm, bright stars their vigils keep.
'Tis beautiful to know that thou
Art sleeping in such quiet now!

The Mussulman may breathe a curse
Perchance above the blossoming sod,
Where the dear flower our love did nurse
Waits the transplanting of her God;
But in a thousand hearts beside,
Sweet thoughts are linked with her who died.

With her who died — but not before
The mission of her life was done;
'Twas hers to win the wand'rer o'er
And point him to the Bleeding One;
To pour on eyelids wrapped in night
The radiance of the gospel light.

To teach the untaught, to lead the lame,
To breathe upon the dull deaf ear

The music of a Saviour's name;
To guide the weak, the faint to cheer;
And, in her every act, to show
What love could do for God below.

Sleep, dear one, — we may never gaze
Upon the mound that marks thy rest,
But we shall meet thee face to face
In God's dear kingdom, and be blest;
And so we leave thee to thy sleep,
With eyes that smile as well as weep.

MARY.

Lay her hands evenly on her breast,
And leave her to her rest —
She was of Heaven — not of Earth —
God called her from her birth.

Stay — let me look on her once more; —
How calm, and pale, and still she lies!
She never looked like this before —
I remember how in her eyes
A sudden flash of mirth would rise, —
And how, around those lips so pale,
Would float and then exhale
Love's warmest and most tremulous sighs.
And now she lies,
As I have said,
All pale, and calm, and cold, and dead!

Oh, I could weep,
Only she lies in such a holy sleep!
So fair and still,
That if I wept 'twould be against my will.

So lay her hands evenly on her breast,
And leave her to her rest;
She was of Heaven — not of Earth —
God called her from her birth.

But no! — fold back the snow-white sheet —
Not half so white as her marble brow —
How lovely in her slumber sweet,
Looks the pale Dreamer now!
Dreamer? — oh no — her dreams are done!
The latest and the fairest one
She woke from, when she gave her hand
Unto the waiting angel-band
Who led her into the heavenly land.

What a bright waking 't must have been,
Free from sorrow, free from sin!
Tho', of a truth, she little knew
Of sorrow, for her griefs were few;
And, for her sins — God knows them all —
But to us they look scant and small.
She was *always* good and mild
From being a little child —
A little child — I see her now,
A fair, bright, little child again, —
With a warm, glorious brow,
And a smile that flitted now and then
Over her features, like the gleam
Of moonlight on the snow,
Only a kindlier, warmer beam; —
But that was years ago:
And now how uselessly I dream! —
For never will her features more
Wear the *old look* — the look they wore
In those bright days of yore,
Those blessed, blessed days of yore!

So lay her hands evenly on her breast,
And leave her to her rest;
She was of Heaven — not of Earth —
God called her from her birth!

SONNET.

Like the first star that heralds glorious Eve, —
Like the first blush that beckons in the Day, —
Like the first snow-drop lavish Aprils weave
To deck the bosom of the festive May, —
Like the warm carol of the early bird
Whose note was mute before or idly heard, —
Like all dear things just bursting, — like the bloom
Of the fresh rose-bud rending its green tomb, —
So burst thy love upon my helpless life,
Dear Mother, when that hour of pain and strife
That laid me in thine arms, gave place to tears
Of exquisite, sweet joy and holy fears!
Thy love, dear Mother, warmed me into birth,
Nor shall its ray depart while either dwell on earth!

VOICES OF CHEER.

VOICES OF CHEER.

TRY.

At least, I'll try! There never yet
Was anything lost by trying;
And, if I fail, what matters it? —
There's still no room for a useless sighing.
I'll prove whatever within me lies
That's worth the pains to find it;
Since, where I fail, it is surely best
To *know* the lack tho' I may not *mind* it.

Life has a secret that all might guess
With a little care and trouble, —
There's never a Lion in the way,
But a faint heart always sees it double.

Up! faint heart, with the strength thou hast!
One at the act will vanish,
And, for the other, there's strength enow
To battle the beast if thou canst not banish.

"Stretch forth thine hand," said the Christ divine
To the withered, sick Judean,
— And the brave man lifted a palm restored,
In sight of the gracious Galilean!
"Stretch forth thine hand," is the mandate still,
Spite of its guilty weakness —
Courage and firm Faith, Christ-like, heal
The palsied palm that is raised in meekness.

Lifted in meekness, but not in doubt;
Raised with a brave endeavor;
Lifted to grapple with Sloth and Sin;
Raised with a purpose faltering never!
Heaven and Justice and Truth will help
The soul thus firm and fearless,
Granting at length in the noble end,
A great, brave victory, strong and tearless!

AN INCIDENT.

SARAH paused anear the window,
Gathered up her baby form,
And with pleased, incredulous wonder,
Gazed upon the wintry storm.
Slowly fell the glittering snow-flakes,
One by one, like blossoms fair
Rifled from some bower of roses
By the covetous, summer air; —
Nearer drew the child, her eyes
Dilating with a large surprise.

"Flowers!" at length she murmurs softly,
Upward gazing all the while,
Till the fancy warms her features
With a bright, exulting smile.
Bravo! she has solved the problem
To her *own* sweet faith, at least,

And she hugs the dear illusion
Till the glittering show has ceased;
Seeing only in the storm
Summer blossoms fresh and warm!

Darling, show my heart the lesson; —
When Life's dreary tempests rise,
Teach me how to stand and face them
With thy hopeful, happy eyes! —
In each trial well surmounted
Finding germs of future bliss,
Till I reach that happier dwelling,
Where, in looking back, on this,
I shall see Life's stormiest hours
Wove for me but sweetest flowers!

"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." PSALMS.

ROUSE thee, child of sorrow,
Lay thy sadness by;
Look! — a brighter morrow
Dawneth in the sky.
Night is passing over,
Vanishing away;
Rouse thee to discover
Signs of coming day.

Wherefore weeping ever,
Eyes bent on the ground?
See! look upward! — never
Played such light around!
What in all this gladness
O'er thee kindly spread,
Seest thou for sadness?
— Lone one, lift thy head.

True the Past looks dreary,
  True the night was long,
True thy heart is weary,
  All untuned to song.
But why look behind thee? —
  Wherefore yield to grief? —
Tears can never find thee
  Comfort or relief.

Bid the "dead Past" hurry
  With his phantoms grim
Far away — and bury,
  Bury them and Him!
Sepulchre thy weakness,
  Lay it all away, —
And in trusting meekness
  Wait the coming day.

Selfish is the sorrow
  That refuses balm,
Loth from Heaven to borrow
  Happiness and calm; —

Evil is the spirit
That will ne'er look up,
When some friend to cheer it
Lifts the soothing cup.

Rouse thee then from weeping,
Rouse thee from regret;
List the Future's teaching, —
"Rally and forget!"
Strong for coming sorrow
If 't must needs *be* so,
Hope that each to-morrow
Brighter signs will show.

A LESSON.

Slowly to my sleepless eyelids crept the hours of night away,
Till athwart the shrouded windows stole the dawning of the day.

Deep unquiet filled my bosom — all God's ways seemed dark and blind,
All his dealings with my spirit strangely hidden and unkind.

Wearily I raised the curtain, for my heart was full of gloom,
When a host of golden sunbeams swept like magic thro' the room! —

Lighting up the dismal hangings, sparkling on the dear old wall,

Shedding such a blessed radiance, such a glory over all!

Every shadow from my chamber with my lifted curtain fled,
Leaving only golden sunbeams, Heaven's dear sunshine there instead.

Then I thought how o'er my spirit hung the folds of doubt and sin,
Shutting out Heaven's blessed sunshine that would else come crowding in.

And my heart grew warm and trustful where it was so cold before,
And the ways of God no longer such a guise of sternness wore.

Silently His blessed angels swept the curtain from my soul,
And the sunlight of His Presence over all my being stole.

For the angels hover nearest, where the darkest
shadows fall,
But for quiet trust and patience looking ere they lift
the pall.

Therefore, oh ye worn and weary, sad like me, and
faithless too,
Wait in patience, nothing doubting that the dear God
waits with you, —

Eager to uplift the sorrows when its gracious end is
won,
When the spirit, stilled and conquered, breathes " Thy
will, not mine, be done ! "

TRUST TO THE FUTURE.

Trust to the Future; — Tho' gloomy and cheerless,
Prowls the dark Past like a ghost at thy back,
Look not behind thee; — be hopeful and fearless;
Steer for the right way, and keep to the track!
Fling off Despair, — it has strength like a giant —
Shoulder thy Purpose, and, boldly defiant,
Save to the Right stand unmoved and unpliant!
Faith and God's promise the brave never lack.

Trust to the Future; — The Present may fright thee,
Scowling so fearfully close at thy side;
Face it unmoved, and no Present can blight thee —
He who stands boldly each blast shall abide.
Never a storm but the tainted air needs it,
Never a storm but the sunshine succeeds it;
Each has a lesson, and he alone reads it
Rightly, who takes it and makes it his guide.

Trust to the Future; — It stands like an angel,
Waiting to lead thee, to bless and to cheer;
Singing of hope like some blessed Evangel,
Luring thee on to a brighter career.
Why should the Past or the Present oppress thee?
Stamp on their coils, for, with arms to caress thee,
See, the great Future stands yearning to bless thee;
Press boldly forward, nor yield to a fear!

Trust to the Future; — It will not deceive thee,
So thou but meet it with brave heart and strong;
Now begin living anew, and, believe me,
Gladness and Triumph will follow ere long.
Never a night but there cometh a morrow,
Never a grief but the hopeful will borrow
Something of gladness to lighten the sorrow;
Life unto such is a conqueror's song!

Trust to the Future, then; — Cease from your weeping;
Faith and a firm heart are all that you need —
God and his angels have yet in their keeping
Harvests of joy if we'll sow but the seed!

Trust to the Future, — áll life will be glorious;
Trust, — for in trusting the soul is victorious;
Trust, — and in trusting be strong and laborious;
Up and be doing, and give God the meed!

A VOICE FOR THE POOR.

A VOICE FOR THE POOR.

Put out the light
And look into the night.
Raise the curtain high and higher,
Quench the glare of the blinding fire,
So may we look to our hearts' desire
Into the night! —
Into the face of the black, black night.
What a sight! —
Earth seems maddened with affright!
Hear the wild Wind shrieking, roaring,
Mercy from the Storm imploring.
The merciless Storm, that never hears
The wild Wind pleading in his ears,
Praying for a little space,
A little slackening in the race.

But the pitiless sleet keeps flying on
Here and there and everywhere,
Challenging the weary air
To another race now this is won.
Merciless Storm, we pray thee, hark
To the wild Wind's praying;
Listen thro' the dreary dark
To what his pleading lips are saying:

"Oh, the Poor,
The Poor and Old,
On the moor
And on the wold, —
How desolate they are to-night and cold!
— I have been
To the cottage in the glen;
I whirled around the crazy shed
Where the children were all a-bed,
And I could hear them moan and weep,
For they could not sleep.
'We cannot sleep,' said they,
'Father is out on the stormy bay,

And the night is dark and the sea is deep;
Would God that it were day!'
What more the little children said
I cannot say,
For I stopped my ears and whirled away
To pray in thine instead
For a little space,
A little slackening in the race,
That so the weeping children may
Behold again the father's face,
Returning with the morning's ray
Back from the stormy bay."

But the merciless sleet keeps flying on
Here and there and everywhere,
Challenging the weary air
To another race now this is won.
Merciless Storm, we pray thee, hark
To the wild Wind's praying;
Listen thro' the dreary dark
To what his pleading lips are saying:

"Oh, the Poor,
The Poor and Old,
On the moor
And on the wold, —
How desolate they are to-night and cold!
— I met a Traveller on the hill —
An old man, faint and very chill —
Hoary with age, and hoarier still
With the white, blinding snow
That over his hoary locks did blow.
Pity the Traveller old and gray!
May-be he has pushed all day
Thro' the driving storm and sleet;
May-be he has lost his way,
And his shivering feet,
How they must long and ache to greet
The glowing fireside's genial heat!
Pity the Traveller old and gray,
Pity the faint old man, I pray."

But the merciless sleet keeps flying on
Here and there and everywhere,

Challenging the weary air
To another race now this is won.
Merciless Storm, we pray thee, hark
To the wild Wind's praying,
Listen thro' the dreary dark
To what his pleading lips are saying:

"Oh, the Poor,
The Poor and Old,
On the moor
And on the wold, —
How desolate they are to-night and cold!
— I peeped into the broken panes,
Where the snow, and sleet, and rains
Of many a weary year have stolen,
Till the sashes are smeared, and soaked, and swollen.
Little children with tangled hair,
And lips awry and feet half bare,
Huddled around the smouldering fire,
Like beasts half crouching in their lair;
While each, the while, by stealth drew nigher,
Covetous of the other's share.

Oh, 'twas a pitiful sight to see!
And mothers too were there,
With infants shivering on their knee,
Or closer held with a mother's care,
Or laid to rest with a hurried prayer,
A moan, half hope and half despair,
A muttered, 'Pitiless Storm, forbear!'"

But the merciless sleet keeps flying on
Here and there and everywhere,
Challenging the weary air
To another race now this is won.
Yet over all, thro' sleet and rain,
I seem to hear this low refrain,
This sobbing, desolate, direful strain:

"Oh, the Poor,
The Poor and Old,
On the moor
And on the wold, —
How desolate they are to-night and cold!'
And I sit and muse at my window still,

And strain my eyes to the distant hill
In search of the Traveller old and chill;
For I long to brush from his shivering form
The angry curse of the hoary Storm,
And take him in from the snow and sleet,
And wrap his aching feet
In soft, old moccasins, snug and warm.
And fain too would I go
Thro' the drifted banks of snow,
To the crazy shed in the dismal glen,
Where the children are moaning so,
And whisper words of hope and cheer,
How that the Storm, tho' bleak and drear,
Perchance by morning light will clear,
Bringing the father home again.
And in the alleys and wet lanes
Where freezing children huddle together,
'Twere almost worth my pains
To face this desperate weather,
If but the wish to show them good
Would pile on the blazing wood
And give them shelter, and clothes, and food!

But here I sit at my window still,
With nothing to show but a hearty will
And earnest longing to help them each,
Tho' far beyond my reach;
While still the Wind's low, sobbing strain
Keeps smiting my ear with its sad refrain:

"Oh, the Poor,
The Poor and Old,
On the moor,
And on the wold, —
How desolate they are to-night and cold!"
And I think how sadly to us all
Wails up this universal call
From God's great earth in heat or cold,
In bright or blustering weather, —
For each his brother's hand should hold,
And all should hope and strive together
As equal sons of one great Father.
God knows there is enough of care
For each to have his share! —

Enough, alas, of crime and sin,
Not loved perchance nor gloried in,
But born of Poverty and Woes
The rich man never knows, —
Enough to make us all forbear, —
Enough to urge our warmest powers
In gladdening this poor world of ours, —
In sowing it with golden seeds
Of generous Resolves and Deeds, —
In scattering sunshine all around,
Alike on rich and fallow ground.
So would this earth be nearer God, —
Till, throwing its warm life abroad,
'Twould blossom to the very skies,
A Harvest of glad Prophecies!
The Aloe of the patient Centuries!

Morning! — 'tis the glorious morning!
Fling the curtain folds aside,
Toss a-back the heavy shutter,
Ope the casement wide.

Ha! the air is keen and icy,
Scattering gems with every breeze,
Where the strong, rejoicing sunlight
Gilds the frosted trees.

Scores of active human beings
Press the busy streets along,
While I linger by my casement,
Ere I join the throng.

All are rising — all are stirring —
Each with firm or loitering tread;
All — except the sick and helpless,
And the silent dead!

Here, a crowd of tradesmen, hastening
To the busy mart or stand;
There, a swarm of idlers lounging,
Curses in the land.

Yonder goes a group of maidens —
Merry, laughing girls — with eyes,

Some as black as midnight, others
Bluer than the skies.

Close behind them skulks a being —
Squalid, meager, hunger-pinched —
'Neath whose woes the sternest, stoutest
Spirit would have flinched:

Woes of poverty and hardship —
Woes of hunger, pain, and cold —
Woes whose only cure is silver —
Only healer, gold.

Night brings sweet, forgetful slumber;
Hunger wakens with the Morn;
Oh! a deal of heart-sick trouble
With the *Day* is born!

Ay, the weary Poor — "God help them" —
What to *them* is Morning's bloom,
When it only shows them faces
Sharpening for the tomb? —

Human faces, loved and cherished —
Beings, partners of their blood —
Wife and children — sickening, pining,
All for want of food!

How their very bones are starting
Where the flesh has shrunk away!
How their hungry eyes are growing
Wilder every day.

How they gather round the embers
Kindled to the last, faint glow,
While the *hope within* grows dimmer
As the flame gets low!

"Ah," they cry, "an' it were summer,
Pain and want we might endure;
But in winter time 'tis wretched,
Wretched to be poor!"

Oh! how strange a thing, and dreadful,
That, upon this great, wide earth,

Stored with plenty, some should suffer
Such a constant dearth!

God in heaven has not ordained it;
Man on earth has willed it so,
Eager for the wealth whose purchase
Is a brother's woe.

Oh! ye Rich, who grind the faces
Of the Weary, Poor, and Old,
Coining human flesh and sinews,
In your thirst for gold —

Who has given you right to squander
Strength and vigor not your own?
Whence your claim to thrive and fatten
On a poor man's groan?

Labor is the poor man's "birthright;"
But for aye must it be sold
For a paltry "mess of pottage,"
When its worth is gold?

Out upon your sordid meanness!
Out upon your coward birth!
Sure, than ye, more craven beings
Never walked God's earth!

But the mists of Morn have vanished
'Neath the garish light of Day,
And the busy crowd has melted
With the frost away;

Still I linger by my casement,
Drinking in the stirring breeze;
Oh! that all, like me, were happy! —
All, like me, at ease!

Sighing thus I shut my casement,
Turn me to my open door —
Sadder, yet a wiser, better
Being than before.

Blow the fire cheerily,
Bid the flames merrily
  Crackle and glow;
Hear how the winds without,
Keep up their dismal shout,
Blowing the sleet about,
  Tossing the snow.

Here it is cheery warm,
Why should we heed the storm?
  We have a fire.
See the flames glancing,
Sparkling and prancing,
Merrily dancing
  Higher and higher!

Still, it is bitter cold!
God help the Poor and Old
  On this drear night;

Freezing and sighing,
Chilled and half crying,
Stiff'ning and dying; —
What a sad sight!

See how they gather
Closer together,
Bemoaning the weather,
Quiv'ring with pain.
How their teeth chatter
With a dull clatter,
Just like the patter
Of merciless rain.

Ah me! how very numb
Finger and stiffened thumb!
Yet the blue lips are dumb,
Utt'ring no groan;
Limbs growing rigid,
Breath all too frigid
Even to moan!

What a soul-sick'ning sight,
On this relentless night,
Savage with storm!
Father and mother,
Sister and brother,
Hugging each other,
All to get *warm!*

Ah, that it should be so,
God of the cold and snow!
Would He might help their woe;
He only can.
Dying by inches, —
How the cold pinches!
Every nerve flinches
In the stern man.

Horrid! — but must they die!
Is there no other nigh,
None but the God on high,
Help to bestow?

— Does He not tell us
We should be zealous,
Yea, even anxious,
Pity to show?

Shall we sit idly by,
Seeing them freeze and die;
Yet for our apathy
Feeling unchid?
Frozen eyes staring,
Wild and despairing,
Horribly glaring
From the stiff lid!

No! — 'twere insanity,
Wild inhumanity,
Startling inanity,
Conduct like *this!*
Unworthy our stations,
Our mutual relations,
Deserving whole nations'
Perpetual hiss!

Let us act nobly then;
Let us be Christian men,
Striving with voice and pen,
  Warmth to secure,
To those who ever
Will bless our endeavor
  Holy and pure,
Pleading together,
"*Oh, in cold weather,*
  Remember the Poor!"

VOICES OF GRIEF

VOICES OF GRIEF.

THE MOTHERLESS.

The day is done! How silently the clouds
Melt in the thin blue air, nor leave a trace
Of their white garments on the azure skies
To dim their glorious brightness. On the hills
Gather the mists of evening, and the stars,
Obedient to the summons, hasten out
To keep their watchful vigils o'er the earth
Till morn shall come again.

'Tis a rare night!
The earth is full of music, and the air
Seems like soft breathings from a calmer world,
It floats so peacefully — and over all,
On sloping hill-side, and in every dell,

Lies the fair, liquid moonlight with a spell
Of dream-like witchery and glorious strength!
And yet I love it not — this peerless night —
It has a tinge of sadness and it speaks
With mournful meaning to my shrinking heart;
And when all else are joyous, and the young
Are weaving hours of pleasure 'neath the light
Of the soft moon, and reading tales of love
And kindly sympathy in each dear face
By her sweet beams, I turn aside and weep!
For there are none to love *me* with such strength
Of human tenderness — there's none to lay
Her hand upon my drooping head, and breathe
A mother's holy blessing — none to note
My sadder moments — none when I would weep,
To soothe with gentle words the weary heart
That beats too often 'neath a gayer mood!

I do remember well one summer night —
Just such a night as this — I had been out
To taste the balmy air, and fan my cheek,
Made pale with weary watchings by the couch
Where lay my blessed Mother, day by day

Wasting with painful sickness. I had watched
The long, long day beside her, and when eve
With its sweet calm drew on, they bade me go
And breathe the pleasant air.

And so I went,
Lonely and sad, to wander out beneath
The star-lit heavens. It was as fair a night,
As gloriously beautiful, as this;
The very air seemed burdened with its weight
Of light and loveliness, and every flower
Sent up its tribute of delicious sweets
From half-closed petals — but the glowing air,
And the soft verdure, and the scented flowers,
Were wearisome to my spirit, and awoke
No chord of harmony, no passionate thrill,
For there were sterner voices whispering there
Of death and loved ones — so I turned once more
To my sad home, to watch and weep again
Beside my Mother's bed.

— They met me there,
Beneath those tall old trees — and with the sky
Glowing with splendor, and the earth below

Smiling with ten-fold joy, as if to mock
My weight of grief, — they told me she was dead!
My Mother! — in whose life and love my life
Was treasured up! My Mother — whom I loved
With such wild strength! I did not, could not weep;
I murmured, "Let *me* die," and with a strange,
Deep, resolute purpose, that they recked not of,
Close in my heart, I sought my Mother's room.
How beautiful she looked! There lay a smile
On her closed lips so like the one she wore
Ere sickness stole it from her, that I sprang
Quick to her bedside, with a restless hope
That they had but deceived me with their tale
Of death and misery. I knelt and wept,
And prest my lips to hers. How icy cold!
Oh God, forgive me for the mocking prayer
That rose from my wild heart — a prayer to die!
To die with *her*, tho' I was young and strong!
To share with her her narrow home, and sleep,
Ay, sleep for ever, so that dawn might bring
No sad to-morrow to my waking eyes,
To write me motherless!

Long, troubled years
Have passed since then, but ever when the night
Comes on with such rare beauty, and the moon
Walks with such glorious brightness thro' the sky,
I think of that fair, silent, mournful eve,
When the sweet moonlight of my life went out
And left my sky without one ray of love
To cheer its gloomy darkness, — and my tears,
When all are gay around me, tell how lone
Is the sad portion of the motherless!

"THE FORCED BRIDAL.

A PICTURE.

Ay, deck her in her bridal robes, —
  The maiden young and fair;
And twine a wreath of orange buds
  And roses for her hair;
Or bind amid its sable gloom
The jasmine's white and starry bloom.

And bid her wreath her trembling lip
  With Pleasure's gayest smile,
Tell her its brightness will allure
  Her *heart* to joy the while, —
Will make those brooding tear-drops flee
That fringe her lids so heavily.

Tell her a bride should ever wear
A glad, unshadowed glance;
Should be the gayest in the song,
The fleetest in the dance;
Nor ever one low sigh be born,
To dim the sweet, fair marriage morn!

— Alas, there's too much mockery! —
Take off the shining wreath! —
Ye know not how much anguish lurks
Those scented buds beneath; —
Ye know not what a weight of woe
Is hid that bridal vest below.

Ay, pity her, — so beautiful!
Sad — yet so young in years, —
Laying her spirit on a shrine
Dim with that spirit's tears; —
Giving Life's sweetest chalice up,
To drink instead that bitter cup!

Oh, what a very mockery
To deck her as ye must —
Better to robe her in her shroud,
And lay her in the dust!
For so at least her soul would be
From its detested bondage free!

THE MANIAC'S DEATH-SONG.

[In one of the rooms was the lifeless body of a young man, about twenty-three years of age. He had died that morning. The keeper told us that during the last few months he had been subject to occasional fits of melancholy, terminating often, however, in raving and delirium. He would mutter to himself—at first in a calm tone—"Oh, the Future! the Future!" but would at length become so wild that it was sometimes necessary to chain him. It was supposed that he had experienced one of these attacks that morning, and had died from very terror and exhaustion.]

"THERE's a cloud on my spirit, a cloud of regret,
For the light of my being all dimly has set;
Like sunbeams that die when the dark night comes on,
The day from my spirit has faded and gone.

"How sad and how lonely, how fearfully dim
Lies the Future before me! — Yet, ghastly and grim,
One beckons me on with his skeleton hand,
To tread the dark haunts of that shadowy land!

"Ah me, must I venture? — a voice slumbers there
Whose waking would wither my soul to despair!
And yet I must hear it, — its tones are for me,
Despairing and hollow and wild tho' they be.

"The Past has a shadow that follows me aye, —
The Present is sad as the dying of day, —
But oh, the dim Future, the years yet untried,
All haunted with ghosts of the hopes that have died! —

"How wildly they call on my spirit to come
And meet them again in their dark charnel home!
How mockingly echoes their laugh on the air,
Like fiends making mirth o'er my cup of despair!

"I cannot escape them, for, spite of my will,
They haunt me, they taunt me, they jeer at me still;
At morn and at midnight, in ranks and alone,
They hover before me and beckon me on.

"Be still, ye dark phantoms that madden my brain! —
Be still! — my wild spirit is quiv'ring with pain;

Above and around me, within and without,
Is chaos and darkness, wild discord and doubt.

"Away, thou great Future! — I fear thee! Thine eye
Is dark with the shadows that over thee lie;
Away, for my spirit grows weak as a child,
Afraid of thy glances so fearful and wild.

— "In vain — with a footstep that falls on my ear
Like the tramp of an army, his coming I hear:
Off, off! — nay, he beckons — oh, save me, nor tear
My worn soul to shreds with thy rod of despair!

"In vain! I must meet him! my soul is on fire —
All shrivelled and scorched 'neath his terrible ire!
Oh horror! I'm fainting — I'm dying! — give o'er!"
— And the voice of that wild one was heard never more.

MAY.

These sweet spring days!—With what a haunting spell
They visit me again. I did not know
That touch so exquisite had power to call
The sick, sick Past back from its feverish trance
And give it life again. This warm south breeze
I deemed had other mission on its wings
Than the dull task of waking grief that slept.
It does not seem a tyrant as it sways
So daintily those bursting blades of green,
Or rocks with such a loving lullaby
These cradled rose-buds that my care has placed
Beside my window for a morning's meal
Of air and sunshine — yet its every breath,
Soft, warm, and low, and musical as it is,
Comes freighted with deep sadness, wild regrets,
And passionate sighs, and longings infinite,
And memories mute and mournful. Oh ye tones

Of the warm sunny sky, why have ye come
With your old errands to my heart again? —
For there were lighter strings within my soul
Ye might have played on — most melodious chords
Waiting to flow with the rich trill of birds,
And the free tinkle of the unchained streams,
Add the light shiver of the swaying leaves,
And every sound that makes the spring-time gay
With its sweet minstrelsy; — and I did hope
To join the universal hymn, and pour
From my freed spirit, notes of equal praise.
Oh wherefore then, half mingling, half apart,
Wells up a note of sadness thro' the strain,
A sobbing, desolate dirge, a tearful moan
From the stirred, troubled fountain of my soul?
Why should the spring-time with its wondrous show
Of bursting loveliness and budding bloom,
Fall with a haunting shadow on my heart?
Has it no leaf of healing, no dear balm,
No heart's-ease for my spirit, 'midst its wealth
Of buds and leaves and beautiful blossoming?
Must it be so for ever? Will there come

Never a spring-time when my heart shall bound
With its old gladness, and my eyes look up
To the warm sky in rapture, and my voice
Mingle with bird notes and the songs of streams?
Have the warm breezes no medicinal touch
To lay on my sick spirit, nor the woods
A simple for my healing? In all earth
Can I not find an antidote, a balm?
Oh, wearisome climate, where the heart grows sick
With its own longings, dies of its own dearth!
Sure I was made for better, kindlier fate,
And Immortality shall teach what Life,
This narrow, grudging, meager thing called Life,
Can never teach me. Heaven has better hopes,
Nay, large fruition. There no shadow broods
O'er the eternal spring-time: There my soul
Shall find its desperate longings satisfied,
Nor feel itself thrust backward from its goal
Through the dull waste of ages. Therefore rouse,
Oh thou sick heart of mine, and in thy hopes
Of the dear heaven, forget the hopes of earth!
Cling to thy birthright! — trust thine own great strength!

Nay, lean upon thy God's — and thou shalt find
Health and repose again; ay, thou shalt find
Each moment beautiful with Faith and Hope,
Each season glorious, and all things good!

A BALLAD.

They bid me sing the plaintive lay
I sung in days of yore,
And wonder that I never now
Trill the sweet cadence o'er;
They know not that the simple thing
Was one my mother used to sing.

They look with cold and wondering gaze
Into my tearful eyes,
And ask, whene'er they name the strain,
Why grief like mine should rise —
I cannot school my lips to say,
"My mother taught me that sweet lay."

And when they urge me to the task,
And plead full oft and long
To hear again the plaintive notes

Of that remembered song,
Still does my voice refuse to swell
The strain my mother loved so well.

How oft when wearied with my play
I've nestled on her breast,
To list that sweet familiar song
Before I sank to rest;
And then I'd hold my breath to hear,
As though an angel hovered near

One evening — I remember well —
In joyous summer tide,
With aching feet and throbbing brow
I sought my mother's side,
And begged once more to list the lay
I had not heard since yesterday.

Her cheek was paler than its wont,
And every breath was pain;
Yet still to please her wayward child,
She sang it o'er again.

— How could I know that Death was nigh,
Stealing each accent silently?

With hasty thanks I left her side
As died the last sad sound,
Nor noted in my childishness
The death-like stillness round,
But with a glad and happy tread
Tripped lightly to my little bed.

And when the morning light broke forth
I sought my mother's room,
But sad, strange figures held me back
And shook their heads in gloom;
They told me that my mother slept,
And chid me when I vainly wept.

And through the long and weary day
They kept me from her bed;
But when the sorrowing eve came on,
They told me she was dead —

And led me, sobbing, to behold
My mother's face all pale and cold.

I looked upon her bloodless lips,
And gazed in anguish long, —
I thought how lately they had breathed
This same sweet, pensive song;
And wept to think I ne'er again
Should hear her wake that pleasant strain.

Then ask me not to sing it now,
Nor bid me lightly wake
Those chords to which my weary heart
Such sad response will make. —
Go — take the lute — I cannot play
One note of that remembered lay!

LENA.

Lucius. "What have you here, Horatio, a Translation?
Horatio. "Ay, master, from the *Heart*—a mystic tongue,
Quite out of use in these degenerate days,
Deadest of all dead languages.
Lucius. "Tut, Boy!
You shouldn't meddle with such obsolete lore."
OLD TIMES AND NEW.

YESTER-NIGHT I saw a vision, wondrous bright and over-fair,
Pictured on the wall and haunting all the intermediate air.

Happy faces of my boyhood, looks that on my youth did shine,
Seemed with eyes of loving beauty gazing once more into mine.

Eyes whose light had cheered the morning of my life, but as the day
Of my clouded being deepened, melted silently away.

So the stars melt out from heaven when earth's weary day draws on,
And the sky looks sad and desolate that its shining ones are gone.

One there was — a sweet wee maiden — lovely as a lonely star —
I can see her now, now worship as I worshipped once — afar.

Never could I come a-nigh her — oh, she seemed too bright a thing
To be touched save by an angel's wondrous, ever radiant wing.

Yet last night she stood beside me, laid in mine her own white hand,

While my spirit thrilled with rapture that I scarce could understand.

Long I stood and gazed upon her with my whole heart in my look,
Reading her love-written features like some sweet, love-written book; —

Gazing 'neath her downcast lashes on the azure of her eyes
Beaming out like warm, glad sunshine struggling thro' beclouded skies.

All the wall of separation seemed at once to be withdrawn,
All Society's prim barriers with one stroke for ever gone.

What tho' she had higher birthright — what tho' her young blood coursed down
Thro' a line of noble houses whose proud head had worn a crown?

In that sweet night-vision vanished all distinctions of the earth,
And we stood like common beings, owning each a common birth.

Oh, had Life been less relentless — had we met in very deed,
Of this after-part of anguish there had been no cruel need.

But with keen perception guessing how her heart and mine were wove
By this sad yet silent process into one warm web of love, —

(For, as yet our lips had spoken not one word of plighted truth, —
She was but a wee-bit maiden, — I was scarcely deemed a youth;

Yet our souls by some strange forecast, some weird mystery of Fate,

Clung together by a tenure that no force could separate;)

This, with keen perception guessing, friends, with roused and angry pride,
Placed around her iron barriers that no tears could force aside.

Scorn and rage and harsh dictation reigned where love before had smiled,
Till o'er-sad and sick of weeping grew the fair, heart-broken child.

Then there came a change upon her: in one brief, eventful hour,
From the child emerged the woman, from the bud the sudden flower, —

Perfect in its strength and beauty, tho' rude hands had forced apart
With a harsh, unhallowed license, each warm leaflet of her heart.

Stern resolve within her ripened — stern resolve to
brave and share
Suffering, Wrong, unjust Infliction — all that mortal
heart could bear.

Thus her soul grew old within her, till — as mildew
blights the grace
Of the premature, forced blossom — fairness faded from
her face.

On her lips the red rose wasted, from her eye the
violet fled,
Till, at length, in withered girlhood, cold she lay —
ice-cold and dead!

Oh, what cruel hands did pilfer from her Life its
morning bloom!
Oh, what monster means did lay her in her damp and
early tomb! —

When she might have blossomed brightly — beautiful
and fair as day,

Had her warm and loving nature been allowed its
rightful play!

Yet on *me* they brand the stigma of reproach, and
wrong, and shame,
Saying "Had'st thou never seen her, not on thee had
been the blame."

One bleak morning — one cold morning — dreary-bleak
and bitter cold,
Came a rider, pale and ghastly, striding o'er the
dismal wold.

I could fashion through the twilight of that dim and
misty morn,
Features of her sire, rage-knotted, working with
convulsive scorn.

Erst he reached our humble cottage — (I was but a
peasant's son) —
He had cursed me for the mischief that my upstart
love had done;

Cast on me a look of vengeance, flung to me a lock
of gold,
Severed, as he said, from temples but for me had ne'er
been cold.

Severed in her latest moments with her own thin,
trembling hand,
"This for *him*," she breathed, — "ye dare not spurn
the dying's last command."

Dumb, in that sad, joyful moment, fell those curses on
my head,
(Joyful, that she loved me, dying — sad, that loving,
she was dead!)

Oh lost Lena, lovely Lena, fair, and pure, and gentle-
eyed,
I would give my heart's last life-blood an for me thou
had'st not died!

Yet, sweet thoughts, like shrouded moonlight, pace my
spirit's cloudy gloom,

While I sit and ponder sadly on thy chilled and
blighted bloom.

Visions of thy strange devotion thrill me like a very
boy,
Till my heart beats nigh to bursting with a wild,
tumultuous joy.

Then thy face gleams up before me, with its brow so
ashy-white,
And, before I know, I'm weeping o'er this tress of
golden light.

So my heart keeps swaying ever 'twixt th' extremes
of joy and woe,
Fearing to alight on either, yet untaught where else
to go.

Oh, my lost, lost, stricken Lena, fair, and sweet, and
azure-eyed,
Would to God thou had'st not left me, or would God
I too had died!

THE OCEAN BELL.*

Tolling, tolling — o'er the ocean
Comes a sad and mournful knell,
Where the waves with restless motion
Rock that solemn bell.

Tolling ever, ceasing never
From the same eternal round,
Both in bright and stormy weather
Comes that low, clear sound.

Tho' the skies above be cloudless,
Tho' the waves be bright below,

* The bell of the steamer Atlantic, lost in the December gale, of 1846. "That part of the wreck to which it was attached, happened to lodge in such a position, that the bell was supported out of the water, and at the motion of every wave struck twice, and so, night and day, tolled on its doleful note."

Still, with note unmuffled, shroudless,
Comes that sound of woe, —

Tolling o'er the loved and parted, —
Tolling o'er the brave and good, —
Tolling o'er the broken-hearted,
Sadly as it should.

Oh, how many forms were buried
Underneath this billowy strife!
Strong, stern men, with earth unwearied,
Struggling still for life.

Wrestling with the gaping billows
Till the hope of life was o'er —
Sinking on their watery pillows —
Glad to toil no more.

Youth, and Age, and Manhood's vigor,
Shrouded in one common pall,
While the winds with ceaseless rigor
Howl alike o'er all.

Well — they sleep beneath the billow,
Sire and child, and man of God,*
Peacefully as tho' a willow
Waved above their sod.

Yet 'twas hard to see so many
Strong, brave men go down to death!
Passing pitiful that any
Thus should yield their breath!

Meet it is that that sad tolling,
Moan should keep above their rest —
Mournful dirges ever rolling
O'er each storm-swept breast.

Sleep ye on — ye loved and parted —
Sleep ye on — ye cannot know
How above your rest hath started
This low wail of woe.

* Rev. Dr. Armstrong.

— Yet a sound at length shall call them
From the slumbers that they keep;
Ay, a heavier note appal them,
In their dreamless sleep!

Well for them, when that loud warning,
Sounding over sea and earth,
Calls the resurrection morning
Into sudden birth; —

Well for them, if each glad spirit
Springs in glorious liberty,
Life for ever to inherit
Where there's "no more sea."

THE CHANGED MEETING.

We met — how different was the greeting
From those exchanged long years ago,
When every moment seemed too fleeting,
And aye too near the hour to go!
How icy was the hand you offered,
And mine as coldly met your own —
How calm the welcome that you proffered —
I answered in the same calm tone.

And yet my very heart was burning
With thoughts I could not breathe to thee;
And my whole soul was fondly yearning
To be what once we used to be.
I saw thee turn away to cover
Thy brimming eyes — it made me glad
To know sad thoughts thou could'st not smother.
— Strange I should smile to see thee sad!

Thee! — whom I loved with such devotion;
Whose every grief I used to share; —
Weeping with love's own deep emotion
If but thy brow was touched with care;
Thee! whose fond smile like life I cherished;
Why should I joy to see thy woe?
— And yet my passion had not perished,
My love to thee grown cold, — oh no!

I thought of all the hours long vanished
When we were happy, loving, gay;
I started back in tears — astonished
To find it all so changed to-day!
And when I saw thou too wast calling
The loving Past all back to thee,
While from thine eyes fast tears were falling,
How could I else than happy be?

And yet, farewell, 'twere vain to linger
On thoughts that are but useless now, —
For guilt and shame with busy finger
Have stampt their language on thy brow.

Oh, had'st thou been what I had made thee,
Had'st thou but bowed to Love's own tone,
I had not now in anguish prayed thee
To leave me in my tears, alone!

LIFE.

"Perfect through suffering."

PAUL.

MUST I suffer ere my spirit
Shall attain its highest goal?
Opens there no smoother pathway
To the upward-struggling soul?
No — like seed that through thick darkness
Gropes its way above the sod,
So this soul of mine must ever
Struggle through the dark to God!

Light untempered pales the blossom,
Suns unclouded blight the grain —
So the Love that's winged with Wisdom
Calls His clouds and gives them rain.

I, a plant in God's great garden,
Grain within His guarded field,
Need I not, as well as sunshine,
Rain to make me thrive and yield?

In the day the great earth wearies,
Sickens 'neath the burning sun;
In the night she rallies nobly,
Till her strength is all re-won.
Dews fresh-dropt from Nature's chalice,
Cool and quicken all her powers,
Fit her for another morrow's
Struggle through the sultry hours,

In the light my soul grows sickly,
Sluggish, faint — until, at length,
In the dark how strong it struggles,
Battling for its bartered strength!
Tears, like dews, refresh and hallow
All its powers for noble strife;
Fit and nerve it for another
Upward effort into Life.

Life is Toil — he lives, he only,
Who, amid his daily cares,
Sees a mighty end upspringing,
Like choice wheat among the tares.
He who patience gleans from trial,
Strength from struggle, hope from pain,
He twice lives — on earth — in heaven —
He who lives once, lives again!

A SEA-SIDE THOUGHT.

Oh, thou blue Ocean! on thy breast
Gay barks float idly by, —
By the soft summer winds caressed,
And smiled on by a cloudless sky.

But far away — beyond this tide
Slow-beating on the shore,
Where the great ships untrammeled ride
And the long billows chafe and roar, —

Out on the great, wild, heaving deep,
There riots many a storm,
And the fierce waters swell and sweep
O'er many a heart once beating warm.

— Oh, thou blue Ocean! who might guess,
Gazing as I do now

On yon bright waves whose calm caress
Goes murmuring round each graceful prow, —

That such dark secrets slept beneath
These ripples flecked with gold? —
That such wild tales of wreck and death
Thy distant surges might unfold?

— So once on Life's calm brink I lay,
A happy, little child,
Caressed by ripples in their play,
While Hope's blue sky looked down and smiled.

Alas, how little then I thought
Of stormy seas afar,
Where the great skies are tempest-fraught,
And the great billows rage and war!

Oh, wrecks of Hope and Trust and Love,
That sleep Life's waves below,
Where the wild seas have closed above
And left no trace of wreck and woe, —

Come from the caverns where ye lie,
For Faith itself grows wild —
Bring back to me the sunny sky
That spanned me when I was a child!

Bring back the faith, the hope, the glee
That blessed those days of yore, —
Bring back the heart of youth to me, —
Make me a little child once more!

In vain! — oh thou blue, restless Sea,
Thy dead shall rise at last —
But what loud trump shall wake for me
The loves and hopes of that dear Past?

STANZAS.

"Changed! changed!"

Nay, look not on me thus
With those sad eyes of thine;
Too tenderly they gaze on me,
Too mournfully they shine!

Now they are filled with tears
That shadow all their rays;
I pray thee, look not on me thus,
With that sad, mournful gaze!

Thou hast been all too good,
Too kind, too fond, — while I —
My blushes must reveal the tale,
My lips in vain may try.

Yet I *did* love thee well,
And thought there could not be
A fairer or a dearer one
Than I had found in thee.

— I know not why it is, —
This change upon me now; —
Not that thy cheek has grown less fair,
Less beautiful thy brow. —

No, — for thy face still wears
The look of other days;
There's still the same calm beauty there
I used so oft to praise.

And yet — but 'twere in vain
To pain thine ear with more;
I only know I love thee not
As I *did* love — *of yore.*

SONNET:

WRITTEN ON THE FLY-LEAF OF A FAVORITE AUTHOR.

Oh Life! — to other hearts so rich, so glad!
So poor to me, so dark, so deeply sad! —
My Past — all blotted with a thousand tears,
My Future — haunted with a thousand fears,
My Present — crowded, crushed with memories of years
Consumed and wasted in a fruitless strife
To bear and suffer on and call the struggle, Life!
Oh, I am weary, sick! My heart is worn
In the long combat; — will it ever cease,
And leave me, bruised indeed, but no more torn
By the strong vulture that consumes its peace?
Oh, fruitless questioning! Why dream of rest?
Let the dark years roll on — they bear me on their
breast —
And I shall sleep at length — my last sleep and my best!

SONNET.

Poor heart of mine! methought thou knewest well
Thy victory, earned with such regretful pain,—
Yet I did wake but one sad, slumbering spell,
And all thy weakness crowded back again.
Ah, woe is me, for that my power is vain
To battle with the Past! — My Father, Thou,
Alone of all, dost know the weary strife
That stirs beneath this calm, unaltered brow,
The lonely contest of my inner life
'Gainst the rude foes with which itself is rife.
Oh, aid me in the combat! Round me cast
The dews of sweet contrition, that my tears
May blind me to the beckonings of the Past,
And be a gulf 'twixt me and those mistaken years!

A MEMORY.

Oh why, when fondly on my lips,
Love prest dear kisses warm and fast,
Wandered my won heart back to thee,
And that half-haunting, mournful Past?
With each wild pressure wherefore lay
Some linked remembrance of thine own,
To thrill me with the old delight
That to my soul so strange had grown?

I answered back with burning tears
Each wild'ring kiss on lip and brow;
I knew no other meet response,
Dreaming, the while, alas, 'twas thou!
But, that one blind, sad vision o'er,
My heart grew calm and still at last —
And a sweet anthem stirred my soul,
A pæan o'er the conquered Past!

SACRED VOICES.

SACRED VOICES.

A THOUGHT OF ETERNITY.

Eternity! — what toil of mine can frame
A thought sublime enough to grasp thy name!
The Great Unknown! the shoreless, silent sea! —
The vast, dim, distant, dread Eternity!
Time knows no line of measurement to trace
This ever-infinite, this boundless space!
Earth's forests are too bare with all their leaves
To stand its type, and Ocean vainly heaves,
And tasks its iron strength to crowd the shore
With sands whose sum could tell its moments o'er! —
For yearless, monthless, it wearies on,
Nor lessens aught when age on age is gone!
— Help me, sweet Faith! — my spirit is afraid

Of its own thought, and, trembling and dismay'd,
Chiding its toil to grasp eternal things,
Folds its faint pinion on thy stronger wings.
As Peter on the dark Tiberian wave
Sinking, cried out for help, "Oh Jesus, save!"
So, venturing blindly on this shoreless sea,
This single glimpse of dread Eternity,
My spirit, sinking, cries, sweet Faith, for thee.
Oh, strengthen and assure me, lest I fail
To credit what but seems a wondrous tale, —
A wild creation born of troubled dreams, —
A thing which *is* not but which only *seems*.
— Yet, there it stands — Eternity — God's home! —
And mine as well when Life's short toil is done.
— Oh, let me gather up my scattered powers,
And task them nobly thro' the coming hours;
So, when my Life, nay, Time itself is o'er,
Looking serenely on its fading shore,
My soul may launch where now it dares no more
Than feebly glance — even upon that sea
Unknown and vast — the limitless To-Be —
God's dwelling-place and mine, — Eternity!

SABBATH-EVENING HYMN.

My Father, in the fading light
  Of this blest day, so calm and still,
Ere yet the shadows of the night
  Lie down on every vale and hill,
While the sweet Sabbath lingers on,
My spirit fain would seek Thy throne.

A hymn of love my soul should sing,
  To Thee, great length'ner of my days;
But oh, forgive me, that I bring
  Complaints instead of grateful praise, —
Forgetting in this hour of tears,
The love and goodness of long years.

I look around on this glad earth,
  And see how bright it is, and fair —

How beautiful and full of mirth —
How void of weariness and care —
And yet I turn from all, to feel
A deeper sadness o'er me steal.

It jars like discord on my heart,
The song of joy that Nature trills!
My spirit cannot take a part
In the sweet melody of rills;
The music of the deep blue sea,
As well a mournful dirge may be.

And tho' the fair and peaceful skies
Smile on me with their glance of love,
And one by one soft stars arise,
Each trembling in the blue above,
It seems a mock'ry of my woe,
That they should shine and sparkle so.

Oh Thou, who once on Marah's tide
Of bitter waves, did'st healing pour,

I look to Thee! — no power beside
My soul's lost sweetness can resto
Oh purify with grace divine
This turbid, troubled soul of mine!

Then shall it yield to Thee once more,
Its willing tribute, pure and sweet, —
And in full tides of gladness pour
Its gathered homage at Thy feet, —
Joyful at length to rest in Thee —
A tired wave that has found the sea!

THE HAPPY LAND.

Oh, there are moments when my heart is longing
To break the fetters of this earthly clay,
And soaring on swift wings, behold the dawning,
The glorious op'ning of eternal day!
To leave this earthly and obscure abode,
And find myself at home, with angels and with God!

Oh there are pleasures in that happy dwelling
Where the redeemed ones strike their harps of gold,
While all the air with harmony is swelling —
Pleasures too bright, too rapturous to be told,
Joys that this earth is all too poor to buy,
Pleasures undreamt of here, but known and shared on high.

There flow the ripples of that heavenly river
Whose joy-inspiring waters never cease,

And there the tree of life is blooming ever,
Bearing the fruits of holiness and peace.
And every dweller in that happy land
May touch and take the fruit with an unsparing hand.

Oh happy, happy dwelling! — Not a sorrow
Burdens the air with sighings of distress,
No longings for a better, happier morrow,
Haunt that dear land of perfect blessedness!
But peace and gladness plume their pinions bright,
And fill the whole blest air with rapture and delight.

There walk the saints in robes of dazzling whiteness,
Those who with us these earthly homes have trod;
Now they are clothed with majesty and brightness,
And talk with angels and commune with God.
Oh, how supremely blest, to have laid down
Clay for an angel's robe and ashes for a crown!

Strange that these hearts of ours should ever falter,
Weeping for those committed to the dust,

Whose souls already bow before the altar
With the great concourse of the good and just!
Strange that our love would call them back again
To life's great toilsome march, — once more care laden men!

Had we one glimpse of that unwritten glory
Shared by the loved one in his home above,
Could he but tell the yet unspoken story
Of the deep gladness of that clime of love,
We should bow down in meekness, and adore
The Hand that took, nor ask the treasure back once more.

Oh happy, happy land! — my heart is weary
With its sad longings for thy peaceful rest;
I'm pining for my home, and long and dreary
Seemeth the way that leads me to the blest.
Yet will I travel on, and hope at length
To reach that land of love, of joy and perfect strength.

THE PILGRIM.

"And the bended bow and the voice passed on."

HEMANS.

WEARY, wayworn, sad, and faint,
Pouring out my mournful plaint,
Crying with a burdened soul,
"Jesus, save and make me whole!" —
Soon He heard my voice, and cried,
"Look on me, — the crucified!"

And my spirit looked to the gracious throne,
And my load of guilt and the voice passed on.

Once again my soul was dark;
Hope was dying, spark by spark;
Clouds of sorrow, fear, and sin,
Shrouded me their folds within. —

But a voice broke through the night, —
"Trust in me, — thy living light!"

And my spirit looked where the bright ray shone,
And the night of gloom and the voice passed on.

Poverty with ruthless sway
Gained upon me day by day;
Tremblingly I looked around;
— Could no help for me be found?
Lo, a voice, — "Fear not," it said,
"Feed on me, — thy living bread."

And my spirit fed on the Heavenly One,
And the faithless doubt and the voice passed on.

Sickness came with rapid tread, —
Laid his hand upon my head; —
Friends forsook and foes drew near, —
All my spirit shook with fear;
Still the heavenly voice was nigh, —
"Lean on me; — *I* cannot die."

And my heart grew still, for my foes were gone,—
And the hour of pain and the voice passed on.

TRUTH.

PART I.

"What is Truth?"

PILATE.

AND what *is* Truth? Oh doubting Friend,
Not with your ashes died your doubt;
Still seeks a baffled world to rend
The veil that shuts the answer out.

Shrouded it stands, as when of old
The sacred Teacher turned away,
With the great secret all untold,
Save what His own true life could say.

Still, what is Truth? Not creed nor sect,
Claiming this pearl of greatest worth,
But owns its brightness marred and flecked
With the poor canker-spots of earth.

I see so many devious ways —
All promise well, yet still I grope;
Bewildered in the trackless maze,
Yet lighted by a boundless hope —

A boundless hope — a holy trust
That light to all shall yet be given;
That some kind, waiting influence *must*
Teach all at length one way to heaven —

One faith — one Lord — one holy seal
Of baptism — one heavenly birth;
Come, thou great Present-One, reveal
Thy secret to a waiting earth!

Like Pilate, we too, fain would cry
Lord, "what is Truth?" — oh, give us light,
Nor let Thy living voice still lie
Tombed in its sepulchre of night.

Bid Thy dear angels take away
The stone that Error's hands have rolled

To bar the advent of that day
By Thine own prophets long foretold —

When Truth shall reign — when all the race
Shall bow one common knee to Thee,
And each shall see in every face
One title to humanity;

When Pagan, Christian, Jew, and Greek,
Shall strive before one common shrine,
No Shibboleth of a creed to speak,
But a name greater — even Thine!

PART II.

"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."
SCRIPTURES.

THY secret, Lord? — alas, my heart
Half wearies in its search for Truth,
And weeps, from all the world apart,
Over its ignorance and youth.

Life seems a great bewildering show,
Crowded with good and evil too —
And who shall teach me where to go?
What path to shun, and what pursue?

For oh, 'tis hard to fix the bound
Where right declines and wrong begins,
Since Virtue's very home is found
Next neighbor often unto Sin's.

I love — before I know, my kind,
Warm love becomes idolatry;
I hate some sin — anon I find
The sinner too despised by me;

With eager zeal I crush some worm
Of slimy Error that has tracked
Its baleful way across some germ
Of good — both perish in the act.

Oh, who shall teach me where to stand,
And how with steady skill to pile

Life's balances on either hand,
Nor jar their perfect poise the while?

Where is that blest Utopian line,
That warm equator of the soul,
Where Truth's bright tropics ever shine,
Nor fear th' extremes of either pole? —

Where Truth's ripe fruitage falters not
'Neath Folly's blast nor Error's blight?
What human soul has neared that spot,
That centre-line of perfect right?

None! Only He who once below
Serenely walked, of men a part,
Yet claiming to His essence too
Copartnership with God's great heart —

He only has the pathway found,
The highway of a perfect life;
Alas, on what inferior ground
We walk with Truth itself at strife!

Yet down the ages' solemn aisle,
  Through the dim vestibule of time,
Come back, to him who lists the while,
  The echoes of those steps sublime.

And he who follows where they lead,
  Thy secret, Lord, at length shall see;
For he is nearest Truth whose deed,
  Or great or small, is likest Thee!

"A STRANGE PULPIT."

[A fact which occurred somewhat recently in India, on the occasion of the great festival of Juggernaut.]

Onward, like some mighty demon, rolls the huge colossal car,
While the jaded crowd, slow-yielding, shrink before its iron jar.

Shrined in its unholy bosom, stands the Idol grim and bold —
Juggernaut — the worshipped monster — tricked with silk and burnished gold.

Shouts, and cries, and wild responses, vex the blessed tropic air,
Where the golden sunset pausing, calls instead to praise and prayer.

Thou dear God, in all this mockery, this unhallowed
strife and din,
Hast Thou not one faithful witness, strong to unmask
the frightful sin?

— Lo, from 'mongst the maddened concourse, springs
one firm and stalwart form,
With his broad brow raised and bright'ning, rainbow-
like, above the storm.

Courage! he has gained the terrace, and with lifted
eyes he stands
In the Idol Car, confronting its grim God with folded
hands.

From his lips no fiery outburst like a fierce sirocco
rolls,
But his calm, persuasive accents sway that tide of
living souls.

'Come to Jesus, oh ye weary, toiling on, yet still
unblest, —

Jesus is the sinner's refuge — Jesus is the sinner's rest."

How the rapt crowd gather round him, hanging on his lips of flame,
As they kindle with the utterance of that well-beloved name!

Oh, auspicious, happy omen! Christ's dear banner is unfurled
From the very gates of Satan to the wide gaze of a world!

Glorious deed! no nation's plaudit crowns it with immortal bays,
But the God of nations heeds it, and its meed shall be His praise; —

And its savor, wide diffusing, yet shall reach the farthest shore,
Till the whole earth swells the chorus, "God is Lord for ever more!"

JOHN 21: 15-17.

"FEED my sheep — they wander wide
O'er the earth my hands have made;
Famishing on every side,
Will ye still refuse to aid?

"Feed my sheep — from south to north,
Rouse, ye saints, my name who bear!
With the living bread go forth —
Give to each and all a share.

"Feed my lambs — tho' weak and small,
Bid them to the gospel feast;
Milk there is and wine for all —
For the smallest, weakest, least."

Saviour, we would fain obey,
Feed *us* with the living bread;
Then go with us on our way,
Till thy whole wide flock is fed.

MUSINGS.

The crickets are singing the blossoms to sleep,
The night winds are drinking the dew-tears they weep,
The birds have all gone to their homes on the tree,
And no one is here in the stillness but me.

The heavens are so placid, the earth is so fair,
So sweet is each breath of this soft summer air,
That surely my soul should grow holy with thought,
When everything round with such beauty is fraught.

So beautiful outward! — but oh, from within,
From the depths of my spirit all sullied with sin,
No answering echo is wakened to life,
But discord instead, and confusion and strife.

I gaze on the sky in its glorious light,
— To me it is dim with the blackness of night,

I think of the realms of the blessed afar,
Beyond the bright region of planet and star;

I know there's a home for the wanderer there,
A rest for the weary, untroubled by care;
But ah, to my spirit no solace is given,
Tho' whispering nature is telling of Heaven.

For how can I hope for the joys of the blest —
My soul all unholy and full of unrest?
Oh, how can I look on the beautiful sky,
And read there a claim to those mansions on high?

And yet I am weary of living for earth —
Its pleasures are tasteless and hollow its mirth —
My spirit is seeking some holier shore,
Where, folding its wings, it may wander no more.

And are not the weary invited to come,
And find in the bosom of Jesus a home?
And may I not venture, tho' burdened with sin,
And plead His kind promise and so enter in?

At least I may venture; — 'tis open to all —
I'll hasten and go at so gracious a call!
And Jesus will meet me and call me his own,
And give me a place near his glorious throne.

PRAYER.

When morning is rising o'er mountain and lawn,
And earth is awaking to welcome the dawn,
When far down the valley the mists fly away,
Arouse thee from slumber, arouse thee, and pray.

And when the warm noon in its stillness draws nigh,
And nature seems ready to languish and die,
Then halt on thy march in the heat of the day,
And lift thy tired thoughts to thy Father and pray.

When evening descends like a spirit of peace,
And labor and tumult grow fainter and cease,
Dismiss all the turmoil and cares of the way,
To pause in the beautiful stillness and pray.

Remember His goodness whose hand has supplied
Each want of thy spirit, nor ever denied

The smiles of His bounty to gladden thy way —
Remember His goodness and gratefully pray.

Oh, pray to Him always — in sorrow and joy —
When peace is around thee or troubles annoy —
The light of His presence thy grief shall allay,
Or hallow thy gladness — then constantly pray.

NIGHT HYMN.

THE night is round me and the dew,
The moon, the stars, the sky of blue,
Sweet breezes float above me now,
And fan my cheek and kiss my brow;
There's beauty, beauty all around,
In earth and sky, in sight and sound.

My Father, help me to look up,
Before I raise this o'er-filled cup
Of joy and beauty to my lip,
Oh help me, e'er I blindly sip,
To raise my feeble thought aright
To Thee, great Author of the night!

How great art Thou! the skies to Thee
Are but a speck, — the earth and sea,

Lie in the hollow of Thy hand,
Like slaves awaiting Thy command;
And stars, to us so vast and high,
Are numbered to Thy searching eye.

How great art Thou! — yet still to Thee,
I, even I, may bow the knee,
Assured that He who built the skies,
And bade the moon and stars arise,
And gave the cool and balmy air,
Will listen to my humble prayer.

And *therefore* do I bend the knee,
Great Author of the night, to Thee.
— Oh, when I sink to dreamy sleep,
My life and spirit kindly keep,
And wake me with the morning light,
To praise Thee for a quiet night.

VOICES BY THE WAY.

VOICES BY THE WAY.

"WISHING BRIDGE."

Tread ye it lightly — this fair, green dell
Is dim with the breath of a solemn spell;
Shadows are here in this calm retreat,
Haunting the air with their shrouded feet!

Forms that are laid with the sleeping dead
Follow our steps with their silent tread;
Tones that grew still in the hush of death
Hover around us with voiceless breath.

Stay ye and listen; — each whispering breeze
Filleth the bosom with thoughts like these;

How can ye roam in this quiet spot,
And the spell of its silence be all forgot?

Footsteps as bounding as yours have pressed
This worn old bridge where your own now rest;
Footsteps whose coming was joy and mirth!
— Woe that they ever should pass from earth!

How many fond wishes have here been told,
Dear to the heart as a miser's gold!
How many bright hopes have been murmured free
Under the shade of this whispering tree!

Love has been here with its magic power,
Weaving bright tales in the twilight hour;
Breathing its wishes with earnest brow;
— Where are the loved and the loving now?

Gladness has trodden this green retreat,
Beauty and youth with their dancing feet;
Manhood and age — and the lisping child
Cheering the stillness with gambols wild.

Sorrow has been in these peaceful dells,
Sighing and weeping, and sad farewells;
Sorrowful partings — yet meetings too,
Happy and gay as the earth e'er knew.

How many have wandered these fair dells o'er,
And this grass-grown bridge, that will come no more!
Each with a wish for the coming years,
Whispered in gladness or breathed in tears!

And are they not sacred — these solemn dells,
Bound as they are by a thousand spells?
Is not the air with a stillness fraught, —
Owning the sway of a mighty thought?

Death is around us, though fair the spot,
Death — in the forms of the unforgot!
Forms that were fleeting as summer hours; —
Say, do ye marvel that tears are ours?

Turn ye away from these quiet vales;
Turn ye away from their mournful tales,
Ye have no tears for the lost to shed,
— Leave us alone with the loved and dead!

JULY TWENTY-SEVENTH.

My Birthday! — I have wiser grown
Since the last upon me shone;
Strokes have fallen on my heart,
Rending all the mists apart, —
Till a clearer life I see
Opening thro' the dark for me!

Let me pause and look around:
Where I stand is holy ground;
Here the Future and the Past
Each their shadow o'er me cast,
While betwixt the two I stand,
Eyeing them on either hand;
And I feel like one affrighted,
In a stranger-land benighted,
Yet impelled to journey on,

Looking ever and anon
Back upon the path I've gone.

Oh, thou stern Past, thou hast been
Witness to the wrong and sin,
Witness to the tears and strife
Waiting on this restless life!
Thou hast seen the sharp regret,
The ceaseless struggle to forget, —
(Dost thou see it even yet?)
Oh, be merciful, I pray,
For my soul is weak to-day,
And it could not, could not brook
All the rigor of thy look.

Bless thee, gentle Past! — thine eyes
Seem to melt in kind replies,
While my soul thus waiting stands
Asking mercy at thy hands.
Thou dost know, as none else could,
All my breathings after good
When the evil by me stood —

And how my soul has struggled still
'Gainst its own impulsive will —
Standing up with firm intent, —
Tho' alas, too often bent
From the high endeavor meant,
It has yielded to the foe,
Loth to give back blow for blow.
Oh, thou great Past, give me strength!
Let me learn from thee at length
How to meet the coming time
With a fortitude sublime, —
Strong to battle for the right
Like a warrior armed for fight, —
Resolute to meet each dawn
With a hero's armor on!
So each day, my soul shall grow
Stronger than its mightiest foe, —
Conquering, on to conquer go!

So the stern years, in their flight
Bringing knowledge, giving light,

Steps shall be by which to climb
Elevations most sublime, —
Jacob's ladders, raised on high,
Reaching, faith-like, to the sky, —
Guides upon the weary road,
Pointing to that blest abode
Where the tired soul rests with God.

KERNWOOD:

AN UNFINISHED SUMMER RESIDENCE NEAR SALEM, MASS.

'Tis a most noble spot, and meet to bear
Its lordly title! How the weary heart,
After scant breathings in the heated air
Of the close city and the crowded mart,
Treasures a spot like this, where it may dwell
And breathe its beauty in, like some sweet, hallowed
spell!

How beautiful it is! — the very skies
Bend o'er it with a holier look of love —
And in the dewy dark, its starry eyes
Seem gazing down like angels from above,
As though to guard it through the livelong night,
Were a sweet privilege and a most rare delight!

How beautiful it is — for vale and hill,
Meadow and wood, have brought their brightest charms,
And laid them, like rich tributes of good will,
In noble Kernwood's ample, generous arms;
Till, like a haunt of very witchery,
It smiles in promise now of what it soon will be.

— 'Twas early autumn, and a calm, bright day;
Half wistfully we turned and gazed around —
How smilingly and fair before us lay
Kernwood, with all its weight of beauty crowned!
Its dome, the sky — its light, heaven's sunny beams—
Its boundary, the blue magnificence of streams!

Before us rose the mansion proud and fair;
Turret and balcony all bathed in gold
Caught from the sunset clouds that richly there
Hung over it in many a gorgeous fold; —
Gilding the quaint, rich carvings with warm light,
And throwing o'er the whole a flush unearthly bright!

Long had we lingered, but the city bells
Tolled a late hour, almost the close of day:
And breathing silently our sad farewells,
From the sweet place we slowly turned away —
Loth that so fair a spot should fade from view,
And turning often back to say a last adieu.

And then we talked of those whose home would be
Within these rich tho' yet unfinished walls —
We tho't how oft the careless tones of glee
Would ring like song thro' the now silent halls —
And how like fairy-land, or some strange dream
Of olden time, the place in all its pride would seem.

Sweet Kernwood! — many a day has passed since when,
With happy steps, I trod its sunny dells —
And yet my heart goes back to it again,
Bound to its beauty by a thousand spells
Of loveliness and witchery, and a thrill
That in my heart like song keeps gushing, gushing still!

"JUST SIXTEEN."

A PICTURE.

Just sixteen! — Her laughing eyes
Wear the tint of summer skies;
Curls of bright, sunshiny hair
Bathe like light her forehead fair;
Dimples play at hide and seek
  Round her warm lips, ruby-bright,
And along her tinted cheek
  Fresh with girlhood's rosiest light.

Just sixteen! — oh, golden time! —
Youth and Hope with wooing chime
Rousing in the waking breast
Tones yet vague and unexprest —
Gentle tones of love and truth,
  Haunting with a magic power,

All the day-dreams of a youth
Bursting, bud-like, into flower.

Just sixteen! — not far a-back
Lies my girlhood's rosy track, —
When my heart was in its June —
With a glorious life in tune —
When I loved — and loving, woke
To a knowledge sweet yet wild,
Whose strange influence o'er me broke,
Leaving me no more a child.

Just sixteen! — oh, laughing girl,
Guard thy hair's luxuriant curl,
Keep the sunshine in thine eyes,
Keep thy warm cheek's dimpling dyes, —
But, that bright dream in thy soul,
Nurse it not too fondly, well, —
Lest, with rigorous, strong control,
Coming years may break the spell.

TWILIGHT.

Shadows of the evening grimly,
Faint and dimly,
Gather on the parlor wall;
Over all,
Twilight settles like a pall.

Each faint lamp adown the village,
With envious pillage,
Takes the semblance of a star;
From afar
Seeming other than they are.

Lamps on high, whose tremulous sparkling
Rends the darkling
Curtains of the shrouded eve,
Seem to grieve
As the daylight takes its leave.

Still 'tis fading — slowly — slowly —
Dim and holy
Comes the gathering darkness on;
— Day is gone!
No more brightness 'till the dawn.

Then again will earth be lightened;
Shadows frightened,
Silently will steal away
'Neath the sway
Of another glorious day.

— Thus I love to watch the shining
Day declining, —
Weaving fancies dim or bright
'Till the night
Overspreads and wraps me quite.

— So, when *Death's* grim shadows gather,
Oh, my Father,
Round my being, send Thine aid!

Undismayed
May I watch each darkening shade.

Calmly, with a holy sadness
Mixed with gladness,
May I view my Life's last ray
Fade away,
Glorious as this setting day!

While dear eyes in loving duty,
(Stars of beauty,)
Grieving, hover o'er my bed;
When I'm dead,
Weeping that my life has fled.

Yet descrying through their sorrow,
Lovelier morrow
Waiting me, — Death's night-time o'er, —
On that shore
Where 'tis day for ever more!

SUMMER HYMN.

Summer, sweet summer, how glorious thou! —
Weaving warm blossoms to garland thy brow, —
Playing glad tunes in the beautiful trees, —
Throwing thy breath on the wandering breeze, —
Waking the voice of the answering stream, —
Dancing along in the sun's warm beam, —
Calling the birds with their wealth of glee
To waken, and warble, and sing with thee!

Beautiful summer, my heart grows gay
With the wild delight of a child at play,
As I see the buds in their opening bloom,
Or fill the vase in my pleasant room:
And I look far down into each sweet cup,
And watch the dew as it bubbles up;
And the wish will dwell in my heart for hours,
That I was a fairy and lived in flowers.

'Tis a childish wish — but I cannot see
The bird and the blossom, the stream and bee,
Or look on the depths of the summer sky,
And then go back with the same glad eye
To the haunts of men, to the world's cold smile, —
There's a weariness here in my heart the while,
And a yearning wish to be back again
In the shaded dell or the leafy glen.

There is not a flower on the green hill-side,
Nor a wave on the summer streamlet's tide,
A leaf in the forest, a bird on the tree,
But speaks to my heart with a voice of glee.
And it is not strange that my bosom swells
With a glad delight in the silent dells,
Or beats with a nameless thrill to go
Where the streamlets sing and the sweet flowers blow!

Beautiful summer, I love thee well!
Thy child am I by a holy spell,
For thy pleasant tones and garb of flowers
Have bound my heart to thy witching hours.

I cannot be weary when thou art here,
For the cloud would vanish, the shadow clear,
To wander out in the woods, and be
Alone with Nature, and God, and thee!

LOVE'S ILLUSION.

What shall I call thee,
My Blossom, my Flower?
How shall I name thee,
Thou Pride of my Bower?
My Lily, my Tulip,
My beautiful Rose, —
The fairest and sweetest
Around me that glows!

Come nearer, my Violet,
Nearer my side;
My Primrose, my Heartsease,
My sweet London Pride.
My darling Acacia,
My Blue-bell, my Pink,
My Fox-glove, my Hawthorn, —
What else? — let me think.

My Jasmine, my Jonquil,
  My Cowslip, my Sage;
My Sweet-Scented-Clover,
  My Youth-and-Old-Age;
My pretty Laburnam —
  I've wearied my store;
Yet tarry a moment,
  I'll think of some more.

Place thy hand tenderly,
  Warmly in mine,
My Golden Nasturtion,
  My sweet Columbine!
Sing to me softly,
  My Calla, my Balm,
And throw round my senses
  A sweet, witching calm.

Rouse thee, my Dahlia,
  I'm waiting thy song;
Ah, wherefore compel me
  To tarry so long?

But — would you believe it?
She's slumbering fast! —
She's nothing at all,
But a Poppy at last!

AN IMPROMPTU.

ACCOUNTING FOR DEFICIENCY IN THE ORGAN OF "HOPE," AND ADDRESSED TO A PHRENOLOGICAL FRIEND.

Hope, the dreamer, came one day
To my heart a wooing,
Pleading, if I'd bid him stay,
Never would he falsely stray,
But within my heart alway
Would be gently cooing, cooing —
Pleading if I'd bid him stay,
He would never roam away.

But my heart, my foolish heart,
Rousing from its languor,
With a quick, impulsive start,
Bade the dreaming boy depart, —

Chiding his audacious art,
Half in jest and half in anger.
So my heart, my foolish heart,
Bade the dreaming boy depart.

Now he shuns me day and night,
Shuns me eve and morning.
— Say tho', — was it hardly right,
Leaving me in such a plight?
Who'd have thought he'd vanish quite, —
Miffed at my o'er-hasty warning?
Say now, — *was* it hardly right,
Leaving me in such a plight?

SONNET.

TO WILLIAM R. DEMPSTER.

SWEET minstrel of the heart! a wondrous power
Lies prisoned in those calm, closed lips of thine;
And when, as in this holy evening hour,
I've heard thee waken strains almost divine,
My soul has well nigh worshipped at thy shrine; —
And, with my shut eyes aching with the tide
Of tears, whose passionate force at length gave way,
I've listened till my spirit has denied
Its union with this coarse and common clay
That circles it like darkness shrouding day!
And I have longed to mingle in the tone
Warm with thy spirit's deep and earnest sighs,
The low, sad, desolate sighings of mine own,
And float thus up to heaven in broken melodies!

SONNET:

WRITTEN ON THE FLY-LEAF OF WORDSWORTH'S MEMOIRS.

NATURE'S own Poet! — found she not in thee
An earnest lover and most ample friend?
Oh, that thy mantle might but circle me,
And thy warm spirit on my own descend! —
That, thro' the outward guise, I too may see
The simple use to which all objects bend;
That every flower, and bush, and waving tree,
May solve the riddle of a noble end,
A purpose woven in eternity,
Slow-working, veiled, and hard to comprehend,
But, when at length wrought out, ordained to be
A golden scheme where all things fitly blend!
Happy, oh Wordsworth, thou! and happy he
Whose simplest thoughts, like thine, to such sweet uses tend.

MY GRAVE.

Give me a grave where the wild blossoms revel,
Let me repose 'neath some whispering tree;
Close by the home of the robin and sparrow,
Near to the haunts of the murmuring bee.
Bury me not where the place is all silent
Save the dull sound of the bat on the wing,
Or the screech of the owl in his midnight carousal
Haunting the spot like a terrified thing.

Let me not lie where the brier and bramble
Choke the green grass o'er my place of repose;
Give me no grave where the poisonous night-shade
Over my ashes its dim shadow throws;
Friends that I loved in the hour of my being
Never would visit my desolate bed,
Or, if they came, they would turn away shuddering,
Linking dark thoughts with the home of the dead.

No — let me lie by the side of some streamlet
Murm'ring its song in the flower-scented air;
Seek ye some place where the spot is all joyous,
Meet for my spirit — and bury me there!
Oh, I should slumber so peacefully, sweetly,
Blossoms to deck me and music around!
Angels, methinks, would be ever beside me,
Making the charnel-place heavenly ground.

Friendship would come with its off'ring of roses,
Twining a chaplet to lay on my tomb;
Love would be there with a smile and a tear-drop,
Smiles for my mem'ry and tears for my doom.
There they would linger, the long summer evening,
Likening my race to the course of the sun, —
Glad in its rising and calm in its setting,
— Sinking to rest when my journey was done.

Over my grave they would talk of the lost one,
Fondly recalling each trait that was dear;
Tenderly throwing the pall of oblivion
Over the faults of the cherished one near.

Then they would pause in the pleasant recital,
Marking the loveliness scattered abroad,
Turning their thoughts to the lovelier dwelling
Where the departed was resting with God.

Then let me lie where the wild blossoms revel,
Let me repose 'neath some whispering tree;
Close by the home of the robin and sparrow,
Near to the haunts of the murmuring bee.
Oh, I shall slumber so peacefully, sweetly,
Blossoms to deck me and music around!
Surely kind angels will hover beside me,
Making the charnel-place heavenly ground!

NIGHT.

Oh, silent, mystic Night! — Too oft I look
Into thy face as into some strange book.
Whence comest thou and wherefore? — What strong
power
Ordained thy waxing and thy waning hour?
— From cold Philosophy I turn away,
(Teaching that night must *needs* succeed to day,)
And read in my own heart and in thine eyes,
Solution of thy seeming mysteries.

I sit within my solitary room
And watch how, mid the ever-deepening gloom,
All things grow shrouded, till the whited wall
Stands a dim shadow 'twixt me and the hall.
Then, slowly rising, through my window-bars
I note how gradually the patient stars

Sow the wide sky with points of golden light,
Like gems slow-dropt from some invisible height,
Or beaming flowers fresh-flung on the broad brow of night!

Oh, radiant sight! I see the moon arise
Just where the sea is married to the skies;
At first a round, broad shape of blazing fire,
But cooled and mellowed as she rises higher, —
Clearing her way through clouds whose torn edge gleams
With the bright shimmer of her lavish beams,
Till in mid-heaven she swings, full-orbed and fair,
A golden glory gilding all the air,
And flooding earth, till tree and hillock seem
The burnished furniture of some bright dream;
And the quaint houses in the silent town
Lose their sharp angles and their dingy brown,
And stand out in the moonlight — fair and neat —
Like fairy palaces up and down the street.
And far away I see the old fort stand,
(The blue sea bathing it on either hand,)

The dim, old, silent fort, where, years ago,
Strong men gave battle to a stormy foe.
How peacefully and calmly now it lies,
Lifting its torn front to the holy skies,
Battered as with the smite of centuries!
— I scarce can think how once these grass-grown banks
Rang to the hurrying tread of warlike ranks, —
How from yon ramparts, silent now as death,
Strong cannon thundered with their fiery breath, —
And how in yon green plain that sleeps below,
The planted troops stood strong against the foe!
I pause and marvel as by turns I trace
Those dim old ruins and the Night's calm face, —
One, e'en in desolation, breathing strife,
The other pointing to serener life
And winning the tired spirit to repose
Like that which from its own sweet influence flows.

Oh, holy Night! thou teachest Love and Peace;
Could we but learn of thee, all strife would cease;
And, like yon fair-orbed moon that clears her way
Through clouds gold-skirted with her own bright ray,

So, gilding all life's gloom with golden dyes,
Our souls should struggle to the upper skies,
And moving calmly through th' appointed space,
Look back at length upon a glorious race!
— Oh give *me* patience, strength! — lift this tired soi
And waft it, panting, to its sought-for goal! —
Subdue its erring, earth-born tendencies! —
Chasten and mould it for serener skies!

In vain, oh silent Night! no voice comes back
To nerve my spirit to its upward track,
Yet thy calm influence shall exert its share
Of holy prompting in my nightly prayer,
And win for me, perchance, a Father's care, —
And, after, gild my dreams with fairest light,
Chastened and pure as thine, oh holy, holy Night!

STRIFE AND PEACE.

"The battle of our life is brief,
The alarm — the struggle — the relief;
Then sleep we, side by side."

LONGFELLOW.

YES, I shall sleep! some sunny day,
When blossoms in the wind are dancing,
And children at their cheerful play
Heed not the mournful crowd advancing,
Up through the long and busy street
They'll bear me to my last retreat.

Or else — it matters not — may rave
The storm, and sleet, and wintry weather
Above the bleak and new-made grave,
Where care and I lie down together.
Enough that I shall know it not,
Beneath, in that dark, narrow spot.

For I shall sleep! As sweet a sleep
As ever graced a babe reposing,
Awaits me in the cell so deep,
Where I, my weary eyelids closing,
At length shall lay me down to rest,
Heedless of clods above my breast.

Asleep! how still this pulse will lie,
Rid of life's throb that beats so wildly!
How calm will be this restless eye,
Erst bright with tears, now closed so mildly!
For not one dream of earth will come
To haunt the quiet of *that* home!

Oh sweet repose! Oh slumber blest!
Oh night of peace! — no storm, no sorrow —
No heavy stirring in my rest,
To meet another weary morrow!
I shall not note nor night nor dawn,
But still, with folded hands, sleep on.

Sleep on, though just above my head
Prowl Sin and Misery's haggard faces —
For the dull slumber of the dead
All sense of human woe erases;
Palsies the heart and cures the brain
Of every fever-throb of pain.

Armies above my rest may tramp —
'Twill not disturb one rigid muscle;
I should not heed their iron stamp
More than a leaf's complaining rustle;
Nay, were the world convened to break
My leaden sleep, I should not wake.

And yet, methinks, if steps of those
I've known and loved on earth were round me,
'Twould tame the might of my repose,
Shiver the iron cords that bound me —
Save that I know this could not be,
For death disowns all sympathy.

Well, *be* it so, since I should yearn
And weep and watch for their appearing —
Chiding each ling'ring, late return,
For ever sad, for ever fearing —
Living Life's drama o'er again,
Its tragedy of Hope and Pain.

Then weep not, friends, what time ye lay
The warm, moist earth above my ashes;
Think what a *rest* awaits my clay,
And smooth the mound with tearless lashes —
Glad that the wasted form within
Has done at length with care and sin.

Think that with her the strife is o'er,
Life's stormy, struggling battle ended;
Hope that her soul has gained that shore
To which, though weak, her footsteps tended;
Breathe the dear hope above her sod,
And leave her to her rest — and God!

WHEN I AM OLD.

When I am old, — and oh, how soon
Will Life's sweet morning yield to noon
And noon's broad, fervid, earnest light —
Be shrouded in the solemn night; —
Till like a story well-nigh told,
Will seem my life — when I am old.

When I am old — this breezy earth
Will lose for me its voice of mirth; —
The streams will have an under-tone
Of sadness, not by right their own: —
And spring's sweet power in vain unfold
In rosy charms — when I am old.

When I am old — I shall not care
To deck with flowers my faded hair;

'Twill be no vain desire of mine,
In rich and costly dress to shine: —
Bright jewels and the brightest gold
Will charm me naught — when I am old.

When I am old — my friends will be
Old and infirm and bowed — like me.
Or else, — their bodies 'neath the sod,
Their spirits dwelling safe with God, —
The old church bell will long have tolled
Above their rest —when I am old.

When I am old — I'd rather bend
Thus sadly o'er each buried friend,
Than see them lose the earnest truth
That marks the friendship of our youth; —
'Twill be so sad to have them cold
Or strange to me — when I am old!

When I am old! — oh, how it seems
Like the wild lunacy of dreams,

To picture in prophetic rhyme,
That dim, far-distant, shadowy time; —
So distant that it seems o'er-bold
Even to *say* — "When I am old!"

When I am old? — perhaps ere then,
I shall be missed from haunts of men; —
Perhaps my dwelling will be found
Beneath the green and quiet mound; —
My name by stranger hands enrolled
Among the dead — *ere* I am old!

Ere I am old? — that time is now,
For youth sits lightly on my brow;
My limbs are firm, and strong, and free,
Life has a thousand charms for me; —
Charms that will long their influence hold
Within my heart — ere I am old.

Ere I am old — oh, let me give
My life to learning *how to live!*

Then shall I meet with willing heart
An early summons to depart,
Or find my lengthened days consoled
By God's sweet peace — when I am old.

AUBURN DALE.

WITHIN thy shades, sweet Auburn Dale,
My feet have wandered not in vain;
Each breezy glade and leafy vale
Recalls my spirit's youth again.

Oh, wondrous spell, that charms me back
To the dear dreams my childhood knew,
When all along Life's sunny track
Sweet hopes like trembling blossoms grew!

I stand within these leafy dells,
Once more a happy, dreaming child,
Encircled by delicious spells
And by a nameless thrall beguiled.

Strange that these human hearts of ours
Can travel back thro' toil and tears,

And live once more the golden hours
That blest those earlier, happier years!

Strange that the fresh, glad, joyous earth,
With its warm spells of light and bloom,
Can make the soul forget its dearth,
Its desolate weariness and gloom!

Thanks, oh our God — for Thine own care
Planned all this loveliness we see,
That every sight, sublime or fair,
Might win us back to Youth and Thee!

Thanks for this hour of sweet reprieve
From the dull chains of worldly strife;
One hour like this has power to breathe
New gladness thro' the darkest life.

THE RAIN.

Heigh-ho! the rain,
The wild, impetuous rain! —
Hear how it raves at my window-pane!
Hurrying down with a mad commotion,
Mad as the din of a storm-lashed ocean, —
Sweeping the mountain, pelting the plain —
Heigh-ho! the wild, impetuous rain!

Heigh-ho! the rain,
The chiding, querulous rain! —
Hear how it scolds at my window-pane!
See on the boughs that are well-nigh breaking,
Hundreds of leaves in their terror shaking;
Seeming to murmur this sad refrain,
"Heigh-ho! the chiding, querulous rain!"

Heigh-ho! the rain,
The restless, tremulous rain!
Hear how it beats at my window-pane!
Beats like a heart with fear affrighted,
Beats like a heart with love delighted; —
Half in gladness and half in pain —
Heigh-ho! the restless, tremulous rain!

Heigh-ho! the rain,
The pleading, pitiful rain!
Hear how it sighs at my window-pane!
Type of a breast that is full of sorrow,
Sighing for peace and a brighter morrow;
Sighs that are uttered too oft in vain —
Heigh-ho! the pleading, pitiful rain!

Heigh-ho! the rain,
The weary, desolate rain!
Hear how it sobs at my window-pane!
Sobs like a child that has lost its mother,
And never, never can find another

To love and cherish like *her* again! —
Heigh-ho! the weary, desolate rain!

Heigh-ho! the rain,
The dainty, delicate rain!
Hear how it taps at my window-pane!
Gratefully sweet, like Love's moist fingers
Laid on a brow where fever lingers,
Drip the cool sounds on my heated brain —
Heigh-ho! the dainty, delicate rain!

Heigh-ho! the rain,
The lovely, musical rain!
Hear how it chants at my window-pane!
Hushed is the tempest's petulant chiding,
Gently and gracefully now 'tis gliding
Into a calm and beautiful strain, —
Heigh-ho! the lovely, musical rain!

Heigh-ho! the rain,
The fitful, vanishing rain!

Now it has ceased at my window-pane,
Through the torn edge of a cloud just parted.
See! one tremulous star has started;
Putting to silence my dull refrain, —
"Heigh-ho! the fitful, vanishing rain!"

EVENING.

Come, dear one, for the evening hour is stealing
Slowly and quietly the earth upon;
Come, for the season of each pure revealing,
With the soft night-dew comes half sadly on.
Nature is quiet and the heart at rest
In this sweet twilight hour, the holiest and the best.

Come, for the light winds with their fairy fingers,
Play their soft descants in each bush and tree,
And in the brake the starry fire-fly lingers,
Lighting the fairies to their nightly glee;
And the faint stars begin to stud the sea
Of boundless blue above, with their soft brilliancy.

See in the west the rosy clouds are meeting,
Laying their glowing cheeks against the sky;

Nestling all fondly, where with kindly greeting,
The sun to earth has kissed his last good-bye;
How lovingly they cluster in the west,
Like tired children, laid in the same couch to rest.

From the moist earth, where the clear dew lies weeping,
Comes the sweet incense of the closing flower;
Most meet it is that dew-drops should be keeping
Their tearful vigils at this dreamy hour;
Ay, meet it is that earth itself should weep,
When its supremest joy — the flowers — are all asleep.

God hath made evening beautiful; — the flowers,
The light winds and the rosy clouds and dew,
Lend each their glory to these sunset hours,
And gild them with a radiance ever new;
But THEY can never image half His worth,
Who spake them all from nought, in their glad-hour of birth.

The stars are glorious, but He is glory,
The flowers are lovely, but perfection He;

The clouds are beautiful, but He is beauty,
The matchless God! the spotless Deity!
Oh, let us bow and worship and adore
The Infinite! the Good! Angels could do no more!

AUTUMN LEAVES.

Ay, they are dying! See them one by one
Fall with a noiseless footstep to the earth,
From the kind arms that since their infancy
Have cherished them so fondly. Not a sigh
Charges the air with sorrow as they pass
From the old homestead where their youth was spent,
And their maturer age; but, from above,
Among the stricken boughs, the sobbing winds
Chant fitfully and low their solemn hymns
And dirge-like melodies, — meet requiem
O'er the departure of those falling leaves.
Those falling leaves! — but a brief space ago,
And they were fresh with being. Spring's sweet breath
Stole like a charmer o'er them, and awoke
Each leaf-bud from its trance, and hour by hour
They silently unfolded to the light,
Until each tree-top seemed a sparkling mine

Of living emeralds gloriously bright.

And then came blossoms, and rare sport had they,
Those dancing leaves, with the fair visiters,
The sweet new comers, with their rosy cheeks,
And dewy lips, and soft delicious breath!
How they would toy with them the livelong day,
And kiss their glowing cheeks, and lay their hands
Caressingly upon their velvet brows,
And play sweet songs to them upon the strings
Of their invisible harps — the tuneful winds!
And then they'd dance to the soft, witching strains,
Making the green old earth like some bright haunt
Of fairy revelry.

Then Summer came;
The glowing blossoms changed to glowing fruit,
Yet still as tirelessly the leaves danced on,
But with maturer grace, for time had lent
A softened influence to their sportive glee;
And shelteringly they threw their broad, green arms
Over the ripening fruit, as if to shield
The precious treasure from the covetous grasp
Of man's rude hand. But the sweet care was vain,

For Autumn's mellow months drew on apace,
And with them came the reaper, and the boughs
Shook 'neath his hand like aspens, till the red
And golden harvest strewed the hardened ground,
Snatched from their cradled home where they had dwelt
In their bright beauty!

So the leaves began
To droop for sorrow, and to lay aside
Their fresh green garbs for robes of darker hue;
And strangely melancholy grew the tones
Of their sweet harps, until the love of life
Grew cold within their bosoms; — blossoms, fruits,
And summer days had gone, and what had they
Longer to do with life? — so, one by one,
They gathered up their dark and rustling robes,
Glad that the toil of life was done, — and died!

THE CHILD'S LAST WISH.

"Mother, dear Mother, the day is done;
Rapidly sinketh the setting sun, —
While on the wings of the passing hours,
Lingers the breath of the shutting flowers.
Mother, dear Mother, before I die,
Throw up the sash to the clear night-sky;
Fain would I whisper a last farewell
To the gentle flowers that I loved so well."

The Mother rose with a tearful eye,
And threw up the sash to the evening sky.

"Mother, dear Mother, they all are there
With their gentle eyes and their foreheads fair; —
Lily and Violet, Myrtle and Rose,
Laying them down to their night's repose.

Mother, I wish I could pass away
From this lovely earth with the dying day!
How sweet to be borne to celestial bowers
On the pleasant breath of the fainting flowers!"

The Mother turned with an anxious eye,
And gazed on her darling tearfully.

"Mother, dear Mother, I fain would rest,
Pillowed once more on your loving breast.
Dark to my vision is twilight now,
Cold are the shadows that press my brow.
Mother, dear Mother, your gentle face
Mid the thick darkness no more I trace;
Death is around me — farewell — I roam
On the breath of flowers to my heavenly home."

The Mother gazed — but her tears were dried;
Her child — with the fainting blossoms — died!

HESPERUS.

Daylight lay dying; — down the sloping sky
Swept the rich crimson of her gorgeous shroud —
(Strange pageantry of Death!) — when suddenly,
From the rent bosom of a rosy cloud,
Sprang the sweet star of evening — for a while
Heaven's only habitant — but soon the blue
Grew dimpled o'er with one continuous smile
From stars that every moment trembled through;
Until it seemed — so merry waxed the crowd —
The very skies must lift their voice and laugh aloud!

Yet, from the glittering multitude, my eye,
Half wearied, wandered to that one bright ray,
That first lone star which lit so lovingly
Its funeral torch above the dying day. —
Queen of the Eve! — the fairest and the first!
Gem of the night, tho' thousands shine afar!

— And still, with love that many years have nursed,
Still is it to my gaze *the one bright star !*
My childhood's darling and my girlhood's pride —
Loved with a simple faith that never once has died!

THE ORIGIN OF DIMPLES.

A FANCY.

One morning in the blossoming May
A child was sporting 'mongst the flowers,
Till, wearied out with his restless play,
He laid him down to dream away
The long and scorching noon-tide hours.

At length an Angel's unseen form
Parted the air with a conscious thrill,
And poised itself like a presence warm
Above the boy, who was slumbering still.
Never before had so fair a thing
Stayed the swift speed of his shining wing;
And gazing down with a wonder rare
On the beautiful face of the dreamer there,
The Angel stooped to kiss the child,
When lo! at the touch the baby smiled —

And just where the unseen lips had prest,
A *dimple* lay in its sweet unrest, —
Sporting upon his cheek of rose
Like a ripple waked from its light repose
On a streamlet's breast when the soft wind blows.
— And the Angel passed from the sleeping one,
For his mission to earth that day was done.

A fair face bent above the boy;
It must have been the boy's own mother, —
For never would such pride and joy
Have lit the face of any other.
And while she gazed, the quiet air
Grew tremulous with a whispered prayer.
Anon it ceased, and the boy awoke,
And a smile of love o'er his features broke.
The mother marked with a holy joy
The dimpling cheek of her darling boy,
And caught him up, while a warm surprise
Stole like a star to her midnight eyes! —
And she whispered low, as she gently smiled,
"I know an angel has kissed my child!"

SADNESS.

Wherefore comes this misty feeling
Ever in my lonely hours,
O'er my heart in tear-drops stealing,
Like sad night-dews over flowers?

'Tis not pain, — it is not sorrow, —
Something holier than they; —
Thoughts, that, like the twilight, borrow
Beauty from the dying day.

Daylight in my heart is dying,
Yet the dark night is not there,
Only twilight, still and pulseless
As the hush that follows prayer.

Call ye not my sadness sorrow; —
Give it not so dark a name

While my soul it lit with memory's
Sad, yet sweetly shining flame.

Sorrow is the soul's dark night-time,
Without light of stars or moon;
Fears, like winds, forever playing
On the heart a dirge-like tune.

Sadness is the spirit's twilight,
Beautiful with day's last gleam,
While, from far, Hope's star is rising
With its calm and holy beam.

Twilight round my heart is gath'ring,
But the bright Sun of the Past
Gilds with Heaven's own light the shadows
That would else come crowding fast.

Though the day's fierce light has faded,
Yet its influence lingers on;
It has faded but to show me
Lights that erst I knew not shone; —

Stars of hope that gild the future,
Lesser than the great bright sun; —
But if lesser, far more num'rous, —
They are many, — it but one.

Welcome then this quiet sadness,
This sweet twilight of the heart!
So that this but gild my spirit,
Gladly with the day I'll part.

TRUTH vs. CUSTOM.

"That monster, Custom!"

SHAKSPEARE.

"The Truth shall make you free."

GOSPELS.

As the wave that driven landward, rushes back upon the main,
Only to be sent to grapple with the pebbly shore again,
So the pulse-tides of my spirit, reaching out to Truth alone,
On the cold, bleak shores of Custom are for ever backward thrown,
Where the monster, iron-featured, sways the race from zone to zone.

Whence this rigid, cold compulsion — this slow tyranny of fate? —

Must I learn from lips of others what to love and
what to hate?
Are there in my own true spirit no great voices I may
trust, —
No dear thoughts, my own by birth-right, rising from
its wrecks and dust,
That my will must bow for ever to the World's im-
perious "Must?"

Can the free soul brook dictation? Wings it hath to
soar away
From these flesh and blood enthrallments, these world-
manacles of clay!
So the lightning, chained and tutored to perform man's
lightest will,
Yet retains within its nature all its power of good or
ill, —
Seemingly subdued, obedient — but, for all that, light-
ning still!

Thus among my kind I wander, outwardly content to
wear

Shackles custom-forged and fashioned with most nice
and rigorous care;
But I feel a spirit in me more majestic than them
all,
Rising in its calm indifference — able to withstand the
thrall —
Strong to make its own enactments 'gainst a world's
opposing call!

Truth and Duty are the masters that should sway the
world alone,
Holding each the same good sceptre — sitting on the
same great throne.
Blind Oppression, narrow Faction, and the whole
opposing herd
Holding Mind in tangled meshes, prisoned like a pining
bird,—
God at length shall sweep them headlong with the
besom of a world.

God — who called the Light from Darkness with a
simple "Let there be,"

He has power to break the bondage, bidding all who
grope go free.
Not for ever shall the spirit, struggling for diviner
birth,
Feel the strong, cold coils of Custom crushing it so
close to earth,
Pressing out its very life-blood, like a vintage little
worth!

Not for ever — for already, — crimsoning the distant
years
With the glory of its zenith, — that prophetic dawn
appears,
When the free soul, no more crouching, hound-like,
to another's nod,
Throwing off each burning shackle, yields it to the
eternal sod,
Till the whole earth stands unfettered 'neath the per-
fect reign of God!

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